









# THE GARDEN AT MONKHOLME.

BY A. ARMITT.

*Author of "In Shallow Waters," &c.*

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## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

### Athenæum.

"Truly excellent, in power of analysis and interest, is 'The Garden at Monkholme.' The plot, though it faintly reminds one of 'Enoch Arden,' is in reality not at all the same. There are a quiet power and pathos about the tale which are attractive."

### The Saturday Review.

"Critics who measure their words and do not care to seem carried away without good cause, use the word 'power' with a sense of venture and responsibility. Nor would it seem to the reader from the quiet tenor of the early part of the story that it could be applied to 'The Garden at Monkholme,' but with the third volume there comes a situation which needs power, and the Author shows herself equal to it . . . The Author shows herself a student and close observer of human nature, as seen in temper, manner, and conduct. These supply her motives, and to show these she has devised and regulated her plot . . . The heroine may be supposed to represent the Author's ideal of womanly manner and character; she has sweetness, tenderness, and grace, all guarded by courage, firmness and self-respect when rare occasions demand them. It is something in these days to have a woman made interesting through simple feminine qualities; because she is gentle, amiable, conscientious, innocently solicitous to please, and free from self-consciousness in doing so; with no gifts or charms that demand a distinct sphere for themselves, whose charm indeed is harmony of being; who is occupied with others, and with making their life as far as she can cheerful and happy: who receives the good things about her in simple thankfulness, not intent on divesting herself of them for the sake of others, but endeavouring to make everybody who comes within their influence the better for them. . . . We have not touched on the passion and tragic elements of the story . . . we will not deprive the reader of the interest of scenes delineated with real power. One parting commendation we must give to the Author's style, which is clear, simple, and correct. Words well chosen always give weight to thought, and are themselves a voucher for seriousness and truth of intention."

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THE  
GARDEN AT MONKHOLME.

A Novel.

BY  
ANNIE ARMITT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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# THE GARDEN AT MONKHOLME.



## PART I.



### AN ALIEN LIFE.

“In the beginning, when God called all good,  
Even then was evil near us, it is writ ;  
But we, indeed, who call things good and fair,  
The evil is upon us while we speak ;  
Deliver us from evil, let us pray.”

MRS. E. B. BROWNING.



## CHAPTER I.

### CHILDREN IN A GARDEN.

A GREAT many years ago there existed in the north of England an old-fashioned garden. It was a little out of date, even then, and would be reckoned a wilderness in these days of brilliant scentless flowers and bright patterns of vivid colouring. A gothic house of grey stone stood in the garden—a house of many gables, with casement windows open to the air; roses and clematis climbed up to its low roof, and a Virginian creeper waved its leaves, crimson in the autumn days, from the top of the highest chimney. An orchard stretched back from the house, and the wooded hills rose behind it; in the front

was the garden. It had no prim beds and designs traced in flowers ; there were, instead, grassy sweeps and wandering walks, narrow and moss-covered, leading between shrubs left long uncut ; there were terrace steps, long untrodden upon, with the lichen growing over them ; green fringes of spleenwort hung out of all their crevices ; the ivy-leaved toadflax dropped over them too, but that was a little broken by recent footsteps. No geraniums were there, but roses were abundant, and fuchsias grew like trees beside the front-door.

At the bottom of the garden ran a brown brook, in the shadow of the trees that clustered there. The garden descended to it in a series of grassy slopes and fern-fringed steps, and a tiny tributary ran down to it beside the green old pathway ; it was marked as a line of colour by blue forget-me-nots in summer. Higher up, in the centre of the lawn, before



the house, the rivulet flowed through an artificial pond, where the broad leaves of the lilies lay still on the water, undisturbed by the swans that had once sailed among them. The swans had disappeared, and the garden had long been deserted. The house was still inhabited, but no one walked in the pleasant grounds about it : the owner had planted a hedge close before the house, to shut out the view of the garden from the front windows, and had long advertised it “ to be sold, for building upon,” but no one had bought it.

On this particular summer the garden was once more inhabited ; four children had come to stay at the old house, and they ran wild among the deserted walks and shrubberies, hid themselves behind the great laurels, and held feasts under the weeping ash which swept the lawn.

The eldest of them was not more than nine,

the youngest seven years old, and not one of them was a nearer relation to any of the others than cousin.

There was Redfern, the eldest, a slim, dark boy, brown altogether, eyes, hair, and face : he was the restless one, who was never in one place for two minutes together ; the naughty one, who always did things because he was told not to do them ; the unkind boy, who teased the little girls and fought the little boys, and who defied his father, and laughed at his mother when she wept over his bad conduct.

Then there was Alfred, who was always good, and who was very pretty, the prettiest of all the four children : he was tall and fair, with blue-gray eyes, and brown hair having a tinge of gold ; he had a nice voice and accent, whereas Redfern growled in his speech like a young bear, and would hardly say two civil words to any stranger. There was Gerald, a

very weak copy of Alfred, his complexion being sallow, his hair a pale drab, while his eyes were of the very palest and flattest of light blues; his voice was a little squeaky, and it had a facility for running into a whine at any moment.

The youngest of the four was Letty. That was a short name for Violet, a title to which she had no claim at all except from the colour which her eyes sometimes took. She had not half the beauty of Alfred; she had nothing noticeable about her, except a habit of smiling at strangers and speaking to them as fearlessly as if she had known them all her life. This habit might spring from the courage and candour of her own disposition, or from the fact that no one yet had treated her unkindly.

Her frank fearlessness gave her an advantage over children who suffered more from shyness or timidity, so that, in spite of a certain degree of mildness and amiability of

character, she generally held her own, and even more than that, among her playfellows.

For instance, on one afternoon in the late summer, she sat on the top step of the three that lead down to the lawn, where was the pond with the water-lilies. She made a pretty bit of colour on the grey stone, in her white frock with a blue sash. She wore a broad-brimmed hat, and the sinking sun was not yet low enough to look underneath into her grave eyes ; she had a very attentive look, and that was natural, for she was attending to herself as she told a fairy tale to two of her cousins who were lying or sitting on the grass below, so that she was her own most important and most attentive auditor.

Gerald was chewing grass in a discontented manner, and Alfred was mending a shuttlecock which belonged to Letty.

“ So the fairy prince, after he was changed into a tulip,” she said, in a solemn voice,

*CHILDREN IN A GARDEN.*

breaking off rather abruptly, "but I do believe Gerald is asleep."

"No, I'm not," said Gerald, "but I do want my tea. I wonder when uncle will let us go into the orchard and get apples, as he promised."

"After tea, when Alfred has set all my flowers over again that Redfern pulled up, I'll ask him, and I daresay he will let us," said Letty; "but perhaps he won't let Redfern, he is so naughty."

"I hope he won't. He knocked me off the apple tree once, because he wanted the best apples himself," added Gerald.

"And you cried," Letty observed.

"Well, he hurt me," answered Gerald, in a peevish tone.

"I should have cried, I know; but then, I am a girl," Letty remarked meditatively; "but then he would not have knocked me, because of that. Now, you are a boy. I



don't know if I should have cried if I had been a boy."

"Yes, you would, I know," said Gerald.

"Well, go on with your tale," said Alfred ;  
"what did the prince do then?"

"You must not interrupt me, if you want me to go on," said Letty, with dignity, though, in fact, she had interrupted herself. "So then the prince, when he was made into a tulip——" So she went on in a monotonous tone, while the rush of the stream below filled up her solemn pauses, and the sun sank lower, and the shadow of the oak reached to the children's feet, until she came to the part where "just as the fairy touched the tulip with a rose-branch with a water-lily growing at the end, and the tulip was changing back into a prince with black hair and a gold sword, and two watches in each of his pockets, just as he had before, and a gingerbread cap on that

he could keep eating, and it never grew any less, and that was why he did not die of starvation in the wood, when the wicked beetle with the cow's head left him there ; well, just at that moment——”

“Just at that moment,” a voice interrupted, “the princess mistook him for a cabbage, and so she ate him up, and had to marry the beetle after all.”

The children looked round. There was Redfern. His face was very dirty ; his hands were full of sticks which he had broken out of the hedge, and his pockets full of unripe apples, for he had been an expedition to the forbidden ground of the orchard, and had brought away stolen fruit.

“You are a very rude boy,” said Letty, slowly, getting up and walking towards the house, “and the princess *didn't* eat him up.”

“Yes, she did ; and she broke her two

front teeth off in chewing his heels, that had just changed back into boots. So there !”

“ You don’t know anything about it ; it isn’t *your* tale, and so you can’t. I shall go in.”

“ And I say,” said Redfern, skirmishing about the steps in delight, while Letty walked away, disdaining to hurry, “ she was grown up, and her teeth would not grow again, you know, as yours will, and she would always be just as ugly as you are now.”

“ She never was ugly, and she never could be ; she was a bea-u-tiful princess,” answered Letty, tears of mortification in her eyes.

“ There, go into a temper, do ! like a good little girl, and grandpa will kiss her, and say she’s a dear little thing, and never cross ! Now do cry, because she’s vexed.”

But Letty had disappeared through the rose trees of the porch. The two younger boys were following, but Alfred lingered.

“You are a horrid boy, Ref,” he said, “and I should like to kick you; only if we fought now, Gerald would tell.”

“Never mind; let it keep till to-morrow,” said Redfern; “I’m going down to look for minnows.”

One morning, a few days afterwards, Letty sat in the sunshine, on the low stone parapet surrounding the pond. She was in such deep meditation that she did not observe her friends the wagtails, who were walking nimbly about the lawn, their yellow heads bright as buttercups.

Redfern was with her alone; that was an unusual circumstance, for Letty was a good little girl, who always respected her own virtue, and avoided the society of naughty boys; but Alfred and Gerald had gone into

the wood to get sticks to erect a tent, in which they were all to reside for a period of, they believed, several months, and in which Letty, as the only lady, would of course reign queen.

Redfern was not to be admitted into the new kingdom ; he would no doubt have been rebellious there, and he called it "silly." He was therefore at liberty to remain in the garden and poke the gold-fish in the pond with sticks. He had a friendship for the minnows, and all other plain brown things, but he hated the gold-fish. "Silly things, with their yellow backs !" he logically observed. "What are they good for ?"

So he poked the fish, and Letty meditated ; and the subject of her meditations was Redfern.

He was to her a mystery, and the type of a great but little understood race. In all her story books there appeared two sorts



of children—the good and the naughty. She comprehended the good ones perfectly, with all their motives, misfortunes and rewards, for she belonged to that class herself. She understood very well how they tried to be good, and sometimes succeeded, and sometimes failed, and sometimes forgot ; and how they were punished, and were sorry, and began all over again. But the naughty ones were a distinct and mysterious order, to be avoided like serpents, and to be sympathised with as little. They said, “ I don’t care,” and they laughed when they were punished.

On this morning she was considering their nature while she waited for her playfellows, and the great question presented itself to her mind, “ How does it feel to be a naughty child ?” Here was a fine opportunity of discovering : she would consult Redfern ; he would know all about it, for he was naughty himself.

Redfern was the finest specimen of the genus that had ever come under her own observation ; he was the only naughty boy whom she had known intimately. At home she had no sisters or brothers near her own age, and her companions were carefully chosen ; her grown-up brother was naughty, she knew ; —at least, it made everyone at home a little crosser to see or talk of him. But, then, grown-up people were different ; they might be naughty if they liked, and it did not make much difference to anybody.

As for the rest of her little world, Alfred was a very good boy ; she did not like Gerald, to be sure, because he was mean and peevish, always grumbling, and secretly helping himself to other persons' things ; but then he always cried when he was scolded, and so was not the rampant, defiant creature of the moral tales.

Redfern, however, was really naughty, she

knew. He was cross, and rough, and rude. Even when he did good things he made them wicked. Some days before, he had been missing at tea-time, and did not come in till late in the evening. He then obstinately refused to tell where he had been, was rude and defiant, and so was sent to bed, and received a very unattractive supper instead of his lost tea.

Afterwards, Gerald said to Letty privately, "I know where Redfern was; when I was out with him before tea, Jim Green's donkey-cart was upset in the lane, near the church, and Jim got his ankle sprained and could not walk, so he asked Redfern to go and tell his brother to bring him home."

"And did he go?"

"Yes; it was a great way, you know."

"But that was not naughty of him."

"Well, he should have been in time for tea, I suppose."

“Why didn’t you tell grandpapa? I don’t think he would have punished him then.”

“He should have told himself. He had got a tongue, hadn’t he? and he would not answer. That was naughty, I’m sure.”

“Yes, I suppose it was,” said Letty, musingly.

“Besides, in the lane, when I said he’d be late, and had better leave Jim, he said I was to mind my own business, and he didn’t care for his tea, or for uncle, or me, or anybody. So it was not likely I should tell after that.”

The fact was clear to Letty that Redfern had behaved badly somehow, though not in the principal matter, and so deserved punishment.

Certainly he was a naughty boy, everybody said so. Even the nurse used to say, “Where’s that naughty boy? Come here, you naughty boy,” instead of calling him by his proper name. He met, too, with all those

punishments and accidents which are known to attend naughty boys. A week before, on one of his secret expeditions to the orchard, he had fallen off a tree and hurt himself badly ! He was never in serious danger, though he was kept in bed for several days afterwards—probably it was considered the safest place for him to be in—but the children believed that he was going to die, and held solemn consultations in the garden, discussing with interest his future fate.

Nobody was particularly sorry for him, not even Letty ; it was only according to the proper and long-established order of things that the naughty boys should fall off the apple-trees and be killed, and the good children should have the best apples after all. They were glad to have the mischievous Redfern out of the way, and to be able to keep in safety their little treasures of flower-gardens without roots, and rockeries of broken



china ; and his wickedness seemed to give an added lustre to their virtue.

Besides, there was a mysterious delight and glory in being connected with such a wicked being as Redfern undoubtedly was. He would not go to heaven when he died, they all knew *that*. There would be no advantage in going to heaven, if everybody could go too ; and it would interfere with the comfort of the good people to have the naughty people there with them. No ; there was another place provided for the wicked children, and Redfern would certainly go to it ; his cousins thought of this with a fascinated awe. The knowledge of such a dark fate hanging over him formed a striking background of excitement and mystery to their own pleasant life of calm play in the sunshiny garden, in the scent of the roses, with the sound of the river coming out of the shadow, through the green leaves.

“ I wonder who’ll come to take him,” said Gerald once, thinking of a being like the one Christian fought with in the “ Pilgrim’s Progress.”

“ Whoever comes, *we* shan’t see him, you know,” said Letty, “ or else it might frighten us.”

“ I don’t think anything would frighten Redfern,” said Alfred, who appreciated his cousin’s courage.

“ He’ll never stop burning ; he’ll go on for ever and ever,” said Gerald, his blue eyes blinking with admiring wonder at such an arrangement for the disposal of naughty boys.

“ He might be sorry, though, and not go there,” remarked Letty ; “ some boys do be sorry, in the tales.”

“ But Redfern couldn’t,” said Gerald ; “ he never meant to be good ; and I say, if he’s been naughty all like that, and goes to heaven after, it’s a shame !”

“Oh, that’s wicked,” said Letty; “there was the thief, you know.”

“It was only one thief, the good one. The other didn’t care. He was like Redfern,” persisted Gerald.

Gerald believed that he himself was the good thief, who was going to be forgiven: he had no idea of agreeing to the forgiveness of his fellow-sinner. That was unreasonable. He became a little alarmed, however, because Letty had said he was wicked. He was an arrant little coward, afraid of darkness, and given to tears if he only burnt his finger; therefore the picture of blackness and fire, which he had conjured up for his own delectation, as the appropriate punishment of Redfern, made him anxious to feel safe himself. So he learnt a hymn, and several more texts, and he gave an extra sixpence at the next collection, mentioning the fact over dinner afterwards. Then he felt himself

a little saint, and quite secure ; so he hardened his heart more than ever, and had no compassion at all for his cousin.

Letty was a kindly little girl by nature as well as by training, and it might seem somewhat strange that she should have so little pity for Redfern, when she believed that such dreadful punishments awaited him. But naughty children were hardly proper human beings to her understanding ; they were created only for the trial and ultimate advancement of the rest ; they had not the same sympathies, ideas, or nature ; their sufferings could no more be understood than their joys, and could not therefore be pitied ; they had such very peculiar tastes, and liked such strange things.

Redfern laughed at the reproving speeches which made her miserable ; he took a great deal of trouble to incur punishment, and none to escape it ; he enjoyed the mere act of dis-

obedience ; he found it a pleasure to tease others, and if by any chance he had been good a whole day, he seemed quite vexed at himself at the end of it.

It was evident that his nature was quite different from that of good children—opposed to it, in fact ; certainly, he would not have been happy in heaven—he hated hymns and he hated music ; he detested clean clothes and new caps, so that the crowns and white robes would have been as unsuitable a reward as the chanting of hallelujahs for him ; he only admired glass when he might break it, and he loved darkness more than the daytime. It was just possible, then, that the region of blackness and burning would be preferable to him ; and though she could not quite understand his liking it, yet it might answer the requirements of his nature—she thought he would be inclined to choose it himself, if only out of perversity. Of course, she knew that

when people were punished it was quite right, and nobody ought therefore to be sorry ; but there might be some explanation of these punishments which would not make them seem so dreadful.

So she had not grieved over the fate supposed to be hanging over Redfern, especially as she had no liking at all for him, and was glad to have him kept out of the way. If she might have converted him, she would have been delighted to do it—that would have been a work after her own heart, both charitable and self-elevating ; but she was not allowed to have access to Redfern, and if she had tried to convert him, he would only have laughed at her.

The littleboys in the story-books seemed to have minds ready for conversion, minds which only required working upon. Redfern did not appear to have such a one ; he was far from practising naughtiness for a period, merely to

give somebody the credit of reforming him at the end. So she let him alone.

Redfern did not die, as the children had expected ; he came downstairs in a few days without any signs of being improved by his afflictions ; he was as mischievous and disagreeable as ever.

“ Suppose you had not got better ! ” suggested his cousins.

“ Stuff and nonsense ! ” replied Redfern.

Clearly, his nature was bad, and was intended to remain so.

“ I wonder how it feels ! ” meditated Letty, just as she might have wondered how it felt to be a frog or a beetle ; “ I’ll ask him about it. Perhaps he will tell me, if he is not cross.”

So she twisted herself round on the parapet to face this wicked young corsair of her imagination, who investigated the habits of gold-fish while she investigated his, and then

she observed calmly, with no air of saying anything offensive, but rather of stating an undoubted and well-known fact, "You are a naughty boy, you know, Redfern."

Upon which followed a conversation.



## CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF EVIL DISCUSSED, WITH A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION.

AND the conversation was this :

“ You are a naughty boy, you know,” said Letty.

“ How do *you* know ?” retorted Redfern, with his usual contempt.

“ Oh, everybody says so” (argumentatively); “besides, you *are* a naughty boy” (conclusively).

“ And you are good, I suppose ; aren’t you, now ?”

“ Well, sometimes I am, and sometimes I am naughty ; but I don’t mean to be, like you.”

“ Oh, yes, *I* know; and you sing hymns.”

“ I don’t,” said Letty.

“ Well, you say them, then ; and you say, ‘ I’ll be good,’ and you creep up everybody’s sleeve, and then they give you good things, *I* know,” said Redfern, superior in his cynical philosophy.

“ I don’t get as many good things as you take,” replied Letty, indignantly.

“ I never said you did,” was the indifferent retort.

After this the conversation flagged a little, the opening not having been favourable ; but Letty persisted.

“ How does it *feel* to be naughty ?” she inquired.

“ Jolly; very.”

“ It can’t be nice to be punished.”

“ Yes, it is ; uncommon. Then you know that the old fogies are in a rage ; and that’s fun.”

“ People don’t punish because they are in a rage.”

“ Don’t they, though !”

“ Grandpapa doesn’t, I’m sure,” Letty declared.

“ Doesn’t he, just !”

“ You are very naughty to say so,” observed Letty severely.

“ Oh, yes ; we’re naughty when we say so. Don’t I know ? They like good boys, all of them, because good boys don’t break their furniture. I don’t care ; I’ll break it, and I’ll knock over the drawing-room chairs when I like. I’ll not make myself into a pussy-cat just to please them ; they wouldn’t make themselves into gold-fish to please me, would they ? I know what they are after with their naughty boys.”

“ It is not only for that,” said the scandalized Letty ; “ it makes them unhappy to know you are naughty.”

“Does it? oh, indeed! I should like to see them!” retorted Redfern, and he began to whistle in the most openly sceptical manner.

“Nobody ever will like you, you know, Redfern, while you say such naughty things,” remonstrated Letty.

“I don’t care if they don’t. I’m sure I never asked them to. Kissing and stuff! Well now, Letty, just look here. When I spoil papa’s things—that’s uncommon jolly—isn’t mamma sorry for me, and doesn’t she beg me off; but when I tread on her brooch, she doesn’t mind about my being punished so much; no, indeed, not quite! So there, you see.”

Letty meditated. “I don’t believe you at all,” she observed; “you only say it because you are wicked. It’s silly to be wicked. You won’t go to heaven, you know, when you die,”—she said this decisively—“and I should think you’d be afraid.”

“ I’m not such a silly.”

“ And you might have died, you know.”

“ What stuff ; I dare say that about heaven is all a make-up.”

“ Oh, it’s dreadfully wicked to say that,” said Letty, with round eyes of horrified wonder. “ If grandpapa heard you say that——”

“ Go and tell him, then, like a little tell-tale,” said Redfern, in a burst of bad temper, for the gold-fish had all gone to the other side of the pond, the sun was getting hot, and he was too lazy to move.

“ I’m not a tell-tale,” said Letty, drawing herself up with injured dignity.

“ You told of me the other day, when I was breaking up the laurel bush.”

“ Well, grandpapa said I was to, when you spoilt the trees.”

“ Yes, I know ; he’ll get us all to tell of each other, and then we can’t do anything,” said Redfern, with vexation.

“It’s right to tell when he said I must,” Letty argued, anxious to sustain, even with the wicked, her reputation for great virtue.

“Oh, I dare say,” sneered Redfern; “it’s being a tell-tale, all the same.”

“It isn’t,” said Letty, angrily.

This philosophical discussion, after the manner of many such discussions, had degenerated into a mere personal controversy; but then even the investigation of the sensations of wickedness can hardly be considered so interesting as the defence of one’s own character.

“Now, don’t get into a temper,” said Redfern.

“I’m not in a temper,” replied Letty; but her looks at once belied her words.

“Aren’t you? No, indeed! No, not at all! Dear little thing!” observed Redfern, with much contempt.

“ You are rude, you are naughty, you tell stories ; and I *will* tell grandpapa.”

“ Very well ; there’s a dear ; what will it tell him ? that it was in a temper ? that Redfern thumped it and made it cry ?” for Letty looked ready to indulge in tears of mortification.

“ No, I shan’t,” said Letty, recovering herself, and trying desperately to get back to the region of calm superiority ; “ I don’t tell stories, if you do.”

“ Shall I thump you, then, that you may get me punished ?” suggested Redfern, obligingly ; “ I will if you like.”

“ No, you won’t,” said Letty, who had now recovered completely.

“ Why not ?”

“ Because you daren’t,” she replied calmly, and began to sing a little tune, to show her self-possession, which annoyed Redfern very much.

“ I dare if I like, only you are afraid.”

“ Oh, no, I’m not ;” and, indeed, she did not look so ; “ I know you won’t touch me.”

“ Why shan’t I, if I want ? are you the queen, I wonder ?” he asked.

“ You can’t, you know ; because you are a boy and I’m only a girl,” and, secure in the defence that she had been taught to consider impregnable, she stared straight before her, as if she believed the conversation ended.

“ I will, if I want, whatever they say. I’ll make you say you’re afraid.”

“ Oh no, you won’t,” Letty persisted, tranquilly.

“ Look here, now ; I’m going to push you into that pond. Aren’t you afraid ?” he said, in a tone of irritation.

“ No, I’m not,” she answered, declining to look at him, though he had come nearer to her ; and she began to sing her little tune again.



She was a provoking little picture of self-possession and satisfaction ; her small feet dangled against the parapet, swaying about in a careless manner ; her grey eyes gazed calmly at the wagtails, and the curls on each side of her round face were themselves so round and short, so self-composed and well-arranged, that it was annoying to any boy in a bad temper only to see them.

“ You *shall* be then,” said Redfern angrily, giving her a little push ; “ there, are you afraid now ? ”

“ You are a wicked, rude boy,” answered Letty, flaming up into anger ; “ go away, and don’t touch me again. But I’m not afraid.”

“ Are you now ? ” said Redfern, giving her another push. She began to retort, then stopped, for the push had been stronger ; she lost her balance, and with a scream fell backwards into the water.

Just at that moment Alfred and Gerald

appeared, carrying their sticks. They were in time to see Letty disappear over the parapet, but not to observe the push.

Alfred threw down his bundle, and ran to the house with all his might to get help. "Go and make Ref get her out," he called to Gerald.

Gerald, as soon as he perceived the catastrophe, set up a loud and dismal howl, and went on with his fists in his eyes to the pond. When he reached it Letty had just picked herself up, and was standing, frightened, out of breath, and very wet, in the shallow water near the side.

She looked a pitiable little object, her face was pale and dirty, her trim hat crushed and dripping with water, her clean print dress clinging to her, all covered with mud. She was terrified; she was panting after her sudden cold bath; she believed the sensation to be that of drowning; and she did not know

how to get out. She turned her white face and frightened eyes to Redfern, and said, "Oh, help me out; do, please. I'll not do it again. Won't you, won't you help me? I shall die, I know."

But Redfern was amused to see her in such a predicament; he did not believe there was any danger; he should have thought nothing of it himself; he had often been in on a gold-fish catching expedition, and the only results had been muddy clothes, and a punishment. Letty had got the muddy clothes already, and would not get the punishment; so her distress only made him laugh.

"Die! not you," he said; "there is not water enough to drown a cat. Didn't I tell you, now? Why you're as frightened as you can be."

Letty felt her feet slipping in the mud at the bottom; she believed that all hope was gone; she stretched out her hand piteously

to the hand that had pushed her in, but it was not taken.

“ Oh, you are a cruel boy ! Grandpapa, why don't you come ? ” she said in terror ; then, with a sob rather than a scream, she slipped back and disappeared in the deeper water.

Redfern stared in surprise and dismay. Gerald ceased howling, took his fists out of his eyes, and looked over the parapet with curiosity.

“ Is she dead, do you think ? ” he said ; “ and what will they do to you ? You pushed her in, I know. Will they kill you ? ”

When a moment passed and Letty did not reappear, Redfern himself was frightened. He should not have been drowned in the pond, he knew ; he could have got out easily enough ; but, then, girls were different. He pulled off his coat without delay and got into

the water; he saw Letty's dress floating in the middle of the pond, and he went and seized it; then he got hold of Letty herself: but she was heavier than he had expected, she did not move or attempt to help herself out, and when he lifted her head out of the water, her eyes were shut: and that frightened even the courageous Redfern; also, the mud was very thick just there, and his feet sank and slipped in it: getting out, with Letty to carry, was not so easy as he had anticipated.

"You'll be drowned, too, I'm sure," said Gerald encouragingly from the bank, and he seemed to think that prospect most exciting.

"Lend us a hand, and give me a pull," said Redfern.

Gerald, however, did not enjoy the excitement of danger on his own account; he declined to give any assistance.

"You'll pull me in, perhaps," he explained.

But Redfern's difficulties were nearly over. Alfred came running back, followed by a grey-haired gentleman and several servants. The gentleman was Letty's grandpapa and the boys' uncle.

In another minute Mr. Hilborough had stepped over the parapet, taken Letty from Redfern, and was out again on the turf.

Nobody troubled himself to help Redfern, who scrambled out as best he could. No attention was paid to him. It was vaguely felt that he must have been the cause of the accident, though nobody knew how; and no praise was given to him for the rescue that had, perhaps, saved Letty. She was still insensible and cold. Her grandpapa carried her to the house in his arms; one servant ran to get a bed ready, while another went for the doctor. The old gentleman did not ask the boys any question, or address them at all; he was absorbed in his little girl.

The children believed she was dead.

“If I tell that you did it,” said Gerald to Redfern, “you’ll be hung, I know.”

Alfred looked at Redfern with horror expressed in his face, ordinarily so smooth and good-tempered.

“If she dies,” he said, “I should like to kill you. I wish you had died when you fell off the tree.”

Then he left him and followed his uncle. Everybody seemed to avoid Redfern; he walked to the house a little behind them all. No one asked, or even wondered, what his feelings were, as he watched Letty being carried home by her grandfather. Her hat had fallen off, and was left floating among the lilies in the pond; her head lay heavily on his shoulder; her white, wet face, with its shut eyes, looked dreadful to the children; her pretty curls were all spoilt; her fair hair fell dripping and tangled over Mr. Hilborough’s

black coat ; no life stirred within and moved the folds of her wet and muddy dress ; her little feet and hands hung down heavily and still.

Redfern believed, too, that she was dead, but he went on to the house. It had never been remarked of him that he took much trouble to avoid punishment after his escapades, and on this occasion he behaved with his usual hardihood or indifference ; he did not know what would be done to him ; it did not much matter, he thought, so he followed them all into the house.

No one addressed him except the house-keeper, who, in a severe and distant tone, told him he had better take off his wet things and go to bed. He went accordingly and changed his clothes, but he did not go to bed ; he wandered about the house, watching all that happened—the arrival of the doctor, the persons going in and out of Letty's room, and



everything that could be seen ; he asked no questions, spoke to nobody, and nobody spoke to him. Mr. Hilborough seemed to avoid noticing him, and he took care to keep as much out of the way as possible.

When Letty revived, and was better, no one thought it worth while to tell him the good news ; he found it out at last by the bits of conversation he overheard ; then he disappeared for the rest of the day, and no one inquired after him.

The next day he occupied himself in getting Letty's hat out of the pond, and carefully washing it in soap and cold water. The result was not very satisfactory ; but after he had let it dry on the grass in the sunshine, he hung it up in the hall quietly, and said nothing about it to anybody. That day also no one paid any attention to him, nor asked him any questions ; they had not yet spoken to Letty on the subject of her accident, and

were probably waiting, till she should tell them of it of her own accord.

She was better, evidently, though Redfern was not admitted to see her ; he could hear her laugh, through the open door, when they took her in nice things to eat. Gerald was very envious of the nice things, and used to grumble to Alfred because they did not get some too.

Gerald and Alfred were allowed to go in and see Letty when she was better, but Redfern was not invited to go with them.

Gerald disposed at once of two exciting questions that had been on his mind for some time. First he begged the remainder of some chicken that Letty had been having ; he ate it up while she and Alfred were having a good talk together ; as soon as he had finished, he entered upon the other subject.

“ You know, Letty,” he said eagerly, “ I’m sure that Ref pushed you into the pond.”

Letty grew paler and stopped laughing. No one had reminded her of the accident before. She turned with a frightened look of recollection to Alfred.

“Hush, Jed, you are a naughty boy,” said Alfred, taking hold of Letty’s hand reassuringly; “you know uncle said you weren’t to speak about it.”

“I don’t care. I want to know. If he did, Letty, and you tell about him, they’ll hang him, or else they’ll put him in prison; won’t they, Alf?”

It was from no desire to save his cousin from such a fate, but only from a love of discussing horrors, that Gerald spoke of it. It disturbed Letty very much, both on account of the dreadful things suggested, and of the memories it aroused of her own terror. She clung to Alfred, and began to cry in a frightened way. He tried to comfort her, and said, “Go out of the room, Jed, you naughty boy,

you know you were told not to," and the nurse, who was in the adjoining room, with the door open between, heard it, so she came and turned Gerald out.

This incident, when it was related to Mr. Hilborough, made him more afraid than ever of mentioning the accident to Letty. When at last he asked her gently how it happened, she answered that she would rather not tell, and looked so distressed that he did not refer to it again.

Gerald had informed the household generally that Ref had put Letty in the pond ; but the accuser could give no good account of the event, and he was never a truthful boy, so his evidence was not considered strong enough for the conviction of Redfern. Mr. Hilborough could not make up his mind to question the culprit himself ; so, though 'Redfern was treated by the household as a guilty person, he was never punished for his cruel joke.

He was not allowed to see Letty till she came down to the breakfast-room. Then, as soon as he appeared, Letty's manner became a little disturbed. Evidently some nervous fear of him had been left by her fright and illness, yet she kept looking at him, and watching him, as if she wanted to speak or to attract his attention. When he came near, she addressed him in a low, hurried voice, and with rather a frightened manner.

"I have not told them you did it," she said, "and I don't mean to tell; so you needn't be afraid."

She seemed to have relieved her mind, and to be satisfied, but Redfern did not look so much so.

"I don't want you to keep it secret," he said gruffly; "I'm not afraid, and you may tell if you like." Then he walked off.

However, Letty had not expected any gratitude, and so was not disappointed.

## CHAPTER III.

*AN ADVENTURE IN A LANE.*

THERE was a pretty lane leading from Monkholme to the village : ash trees grew on each side of it, and tall hedges, sweet with the scent of honeysuckle, shut it in. Down this lane one day Letty was walking with Gerald.

Since the catastrophe of the fish-pond, Redfern had been an object of grave suspicion. Whenever he was allowed to play with the other children, the nurse had been sent to watch them. Redfern preferred his own society to this system of supervision, and so went his own way and left the others to follow theirs.

It was Saturday morning, and pocket-money day. With the vast sum of sixpence each in their pockets, the three younger children were permitted to go down the lane to the cottage at the turning, where, in the little parlour window, gingerbread knights and maidens, elephants of sweet-cake with sugar-plum eyes, and fish made of sweetmeats, were temptingly offered for sale. No escort was considered necessary ; Letty was a discreet little person, Alfred always did just as she told him and made Gerald do likewise, and Redfern was safely locked up in his own room.

He had been in disgrace the day before, and his punishment was not yet ended ; so, from an upper window, in wrath and bitterness he watched the others go, while he jingled in his pocket a fourpenny-piece and two pennies.

For, as a satire, as it seemed, on his sad

condition, his weekly money had been given to him, and he had no means of spending it; they would not let him out all that day, and the next day was Sunday, when shops would be shut, and even the mild consolation of munching raspberry-drops during the Litany would be forbidden to him. He hated the whole world and all the good people in it as he watched the children go through the gate, and he wished he knew how to be a great deal naughtier than he was, just to vex them.

The others started together; they were deep in consultation as to the respective merits of lemon-drops and Savoy biscuits. They were not sorry about Redfern's disappointment and privation of such delights, supreme though they were; he did not belong to their little world, or was only the bad angel of it, who was kept at present in chains, and not able to annoy them.



Their expedition this morning was not however destined to be so delightful and successful as usual. When they got half-way down the lane, it was discovered that Alfred had forgotten the stick with which, as the knight and champion of the party, he was usually armed, to protect them all, it was supposed, from dogs, cows, and bad boys. This stick had never done anything more than alarm a few sheep, or disturb a party of conversational rooks, on the remarkable occasions when Alfred had waved it about, and said “ Whirr !” in an alarming manner ; but the stick, like other great institutions, was believed in—it was considered an essential part of every expedition ; and when its absence was discovered, Alfred at once turned back for it, while Gerald and Letty sat down on the hedge-bank, among the grass and the pale little harebells, to wait for him.

While they waited, two little girls came

over a stile into the lane ; they carried a basket of bilberries which they had been gathering on the hills.

The eldest was not more than six years old, and was much smaller than Letty ; but she evidently considered herself quite an elderly person, and had charge of a little sister and a basket. The little sister was a tiny dot, but compact and self-possessed, like her protectress ; they both had small round faces, brown and rosy, with dark little bright eyes, and they wore clean blue pinafores. Letty, being a stranger, did not know who they were ; if she had been long at Monkholme, she would have been aware that they were children of such an important person as the sexton, and even Gerald might have felt some respect for them, for he had an idea that it was well to be on good terms with the sexton, otherwise he might make it uncomfortable for you after you died.

The little girls came along hand in hand, and when they got opposite to Letty and Gerald, they smiled all over their neat little faces, and dropped prim little curtseys in passing.

Letty nodded back again, and if Alfred had been there, he would have done the same, for he was a polite little boy; but Gerald was not polite, except on compulsion, and to people more powerful than himself. His mind had been fixed so intently on the future sweetmeats, that he had found it impossible to speak to Letty during this cruel delay. Now he saw something eatable just before him.

He got up and called out in rather a bullying manner—for the little girls were what he called “poor children,” and moreover much less than himself, “Here, come here, and give us some of that.”

“I can’t,” said the elderly person in the

pinafore, "they are for mother ; she is going to sell them."

"Give me some ; your mother won't know how many you have got," said Gerald ; and unheeding the remonstrances of Letty, he went and plunged his hand among the bilberries, remarking first, "Have some, Letty, and then you won't tell."

The smaller child gazed at him with amazed black eyes, the older one tried to pull the basket away, and Letty remonstrated with less dignity and more fervour than before. Gerald paid no attention to threats or persuasions ; he only felt that no time was to be lost if he were to have many before Alfred came back, so he snatched the basket from the little girl, giving her a push which sent her to the ground. There she sat and cried, while Gerald ate bilberries as fast as he could ; the tiny child put her little red arms round her sister's neck, and made a bud of

her mouth with which to keep kissing her, and tried to offer consolation in her small way by saying, over and over again, "Me tell mammy."

Letty was in great distress of mind ; she kept assuring the little girls that Gerald should be punished ; she would tell her grandpapa, and the bilberries should be paid for ; her grandpapa would pay when she asked him.

But future compensation did not console the little girl for present loss, and Gerald was eating the bilberries as fast as possible. Bilberries eaten in handfuls, without any sugar, have not a very sweet flavour, but the expectation of having what you are devouring snatched away from your eyes at any moment is enough to make anything delightful, so the thought of Alfred coming directly made Gerald go on eating.

A boy appeared at the corner of the lane

coming from Monkholme. Letty gave a cry of delight.

“It’s Alfred,” she said, “and he’ll make Gerald stop.”

In a moment she saw her mistake. It was only Redfern. She felt that he was likely to help Gerald, and that he might tease the little girls as well. “At any rate,” she thought, “he shall not touch the children,” and with a great moral effort she placed herself before them, leaving the basket to its fate. She felt quite a heroine, and was very much alarmed indeed. She did not quite know what Redfern would do, but he had pushed her in the pond the last time she was unprotected ; there was a ditch on one side of the road ; she felt it was a moment of supreme danger, but she stood her ground ; she was determined not to let him tease the poor children. She was a lady, and these boys belonged to her ; she felt responsible for their crimes.

Redfern came up. He had escaped from his upper window in the gable, for creepers, which are very pretty things on a house wall, may also be used occasionally instead of a rope-ladder.

“What’s the row?” he elegantly remarked, as he stared at the group.

This question gave Letty a little hope. “Gerald is naughty; he will eat this poor little girl’s bilberries, and he has pushed her down and hurt her. Do make him stop, please.”

Gerald was eating faster than ever; now Redfern had appeared, instead of Alfred, he expected to have to go shares instead of having them all taken away, so he devoured as many as he could before the division began, and did not stop to retort.

Redfern looked at him with contempt. Greediness in anybody else is disgusting to every boy of spirit.

“ I say, stop that, Jed,” he said. Then he seized the basket with more zeal than consideration, for he scattered nearly all the bilberries on the ground. Having rescued the stolen goods, his righteous wrath expended itself on the astonished offender. He seized Gerald, and began to kick and cuff him with so much vigour, that the little girl stopped crying, Letty was frightened, and Gerald began to howl dismally.

Letty ran and tried to pull Redfern away, screaming, “ Don’t, don’t !” with all her might.

Redfern shook her off, and laughed.

“ Why, he deserved it all, the greedy little coward,” he said, and, seizing Gerald to give him a parting knock, he pushed him up the lane, and observed, “ Now go away home, and tell them I beat you.”

Gerald retreated homewards, wailing loudly. Letty helped the little girl to pick up her fruit, and explained to Redfern.



“She is taking it to her mother, who will sell it. I am sure we ought to pay for what Gerald ate, or her mother may scold her. I have sixpence; do you think that will be enough?”

“I have sixpence too, and I’ll give her that. I’m glad I made Jed pay for it.”

So the little girl wiped her eyes, and departed towards the village, much consoled by the sixpences.

Redfern and Letty were left, however, without any money, and the cake-shop was no longer attractive. Redfern, therefore, proposed an expedition on to the hills, where, he said, they could get bilberries for themselves, and have “jolly times.”

A ramble alone with Redfern would have more terrors than pleasure for Letty, so she declined as politely as she could, saying she must wait for Alfred. She was always afraid that people might be hurt if she did not treat

them kindly and politely ; her consideration for their feelings was, perhaps, excessive. Redfern, at least, did not seem to mind her refusal ; he said, “ all right ! ” and departed, making his way over the stile on which the little girls had first appeared. So Letty was by herself when Alfred came ; he had been unable to find his stick for some time, and that had delayed him.

“ What’s been the matter ? ” he inquired. “ I met Gerald up the lane howling dreadfully, and his jacket was torn, and he had his cap in his pocket instead of on his head, and his hands and face were as black as the coal-hole.”

“ He had been eating a little girl’s bilberries, so Redfern beat him,” Letty explained ; and she told the fate of her sixpence. Then it appeared that there was something left in life even yet, for Alfred still had his money ; so the two children went down to

the cottage at the turning, and Letty went halves with all that was bought. After that they spent a delightful morning by the brook; they made miniature canals and ponds, and dirtied themselves as much as such good children ever do.

At dinner-time they went back to the house, and met Gerald at the front-door. He was in a delightful state of cleanness and tidiness; and he looked as meek and well-behaved a boy as any in a story-book. It was beautiful to see his limp light hair looking so smooth and flat; no trace of bilberries was left anywhere but on his teeth, and his expression was one of mild virtue. He brightened up when he saw the children, who looked comparatively dirty and naughty; he ran to meet them, and said triumphantly, "Ref has just come in, and he is catching it in the library for beating me."

Letty gazed at him in horror.

“ You have been telling some wicked stories then,” she said.

“ No, I have not ; I said Ref beat me for eating bilberries, and I’m sure it was true.”

“ Grandpapa did not know you stole them.”

Letty stood still for a moment, in which she was gathering up all her courage ; then she turned to Alfred and said, “ I shall go and tell grandpapa.”

“ If he’s going to punish Ref, he’s sure to be cross,” said Alfred, “ and you won’t like it. If you like, I’ll go instead.”

“ No ; I saw him do it. I’ll go.”

Letty walked resolutely towards the library ; on the way she met a servant, who said, “ Don’t go in there, Miss Letty ; Mr. Hilborough’s very angry with Master Redfern ; you had better keep out of the way.”

“ Oh, I must go,” answered Letty, feeling more and more afraid.

She went to the door and knocked faintly,

so faintly that no one heard and answered. Then she opened it and ventured in.

Redfern stood there holding out his hand, and Mr. Hilborough stood before him with a cane. Redfern looked sulky and defiant; Mr. Hilborough looked very angry.

Letty's small agitated voice broke upon the silence suddenly, "Oh, grandpapa, you must not; you must not," and she stood still, trembling.

Mr. Hilborough looked round in surprise, and said, sternly, "Go away, Letty."

"Oh, don't punish him, please; it wasn't his fault," said Letty, going to him, and getting hold of the hand that held the cane.

"Letty!" said Mr. Hilborough.

Letty's courage had all gone; she did not dare to say anything more; she began to cry instead, but she kept fast hold of the hand.

“My dear,” said Mr. Hilborough, quite gently, “you must go away.”

“Don’t be silly, Letty,” said Redfern ; “I don’t care a bit.”

“Be silent, sir,” answered Mr. Hilborough, severely.

His angry tone caused Letty to make another effort :

“Don’t be angry, please. It wasn’t Ref’s fault, indeed.”

“My dear,” answered Mr. Hilborough, with grave gentleness, “Redfern won’t be punished wrongly. I know all about it. He says himself that Gerald did not touch him, or speak to him, and that he hit Gerald, and meant to hurt him. Now, go away.”

“But you don’t know. Gerald was naughty. It was my fault ; I told Ref to do it ; send me to bed, please, if it was naughty ; but don’t punish Ref,” and Letty relapsed into terrified sobs.

Mr. Hilborough put the cane down and took her up in his arms.

“Don’t cry,” he said, “but tell me. I’m sure you did not tell him to do it, and I’ll see about sending you to bed. How was it?”

Letty’s courage came back now, when she could put her arms round his neck, and her cheek on his shoulder. When her eyes had been only on a level with his hand and the cane, he had seemed a terrible personage.

“I was in the lane with Gerald,” she said, “and two little girls came with a basket of bilberries ; and Gerald pushed one little girl down and made her cry, and then he would eat her bilberries. And Redfern came, and I told him to make Gerald stop ; and he did, and so he beat Gerald, and Gerald cried and ran home. But I told him to make Gerald stop.”

“Very well, my dear, if you wish it you shall go to bed ; but not otherwise.” Mr.

Hilborough turned to Redfern, "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"I didn't want to," replied the obdurate Ref.

"You may go," said his uncle, "I shall consider Letty's excuse sufficient; but don't forget, another time, that Gerald is less than yourself. I wish," he added more kindly, "that you showed a little more openness and confidence in me; I think you might be a better boy if you trusted us all more. There, let us shake hands, and be better friends in the future."

Redfern felt a fool. He had no other sensation at this moment. He put out his hand to his uncle reluctantly, and he went out of the room without looking at Letty. He enjoyed being a naughty boy so long as everybody treated him harshly and unjustly, but kindness put him in a false position. He did not want it. He would rather have been punished.



“And since when, my dear,” said Mr. Hilborough to Letty, when they were alone, “have you and Redfern been such friends?”

Letty opened her eyes with astonishment.

“We are not friends,” she said; “I don’t like naughty boys. But it was true, and so I was obliged to come and tell you.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE ORCHARD AND THE HILL.

THERE was a children's tea-party in the orchard behind the house. It was a treat that had been long promised by Mr. Hilborough. The children from the rectory and from the big new house on the hill-side were all invited ; they had tea in the orchard, and might take as many apples and pears home as they could carry. Letty presided on this festive occasion ; she poured the tea into diminutive cups, and had the nurse to assist her. She looked quite as if she were accustomed to that sort of thing, and made a most gracious and self-possessed little hostess.

Redfern was present, and had his tea with the others. His foraging expeditions to the orchard were so well known, that it had long been threatened as a punishment that he should not be allowed to appear at the orchard tea-party ; but Letty, who loved to confer favours, had begged that he might be allowed to join the others.

Redfern, as on a former occasion, thought her interference ill-advised ; he could easily have made his own escape, and then there would have been no need to be grateful to any one. He did not get on very well with the other children in the afternoon ; the girls especially said he was rough, and he said they were silly. So he occupied himself in climbing the highest trees, laughing scornfully at the rest, and filling his own pockets well. At tea-time, too, the nurse discovered him putting a cake into his pocket. She was surprised, for Gerald, not Redfern, was

generally the greedy boy ; and she remonstrated.

“ You be quiet,” retorted Redfern politely,  
“ I shall do as I like.”

When tea was over, and the children had dispersed to play games on the grass, Letty was left alone for a little. She was prudently counting “her tea-things”—which were a present from her grandpapa—when Redfern appeared in the grass beside her.

“ I say, Letty, aren’t you tired of things ?” he said.

“ Of what ?” Letty inquired.

“ Oh, everything. I hate it. And I have made up my mind to run away.”

“ Oh, Ref !” said Letty, putting down her saucers and losing count of them all.

“ Yes, I am. Will you come too ?”

“ Oh, Ref !” said Letty again.

“ Everybody’s horrid. Look here. I’ve got twelve apples and seven pears, and three

raspberries tarts and one whole tea-cake ; I've got a bag hid in the grass on purpose to carry them in. And I'm going up to the lake on the hills, and I shall live there like Robinson Crusoe. There's a brook there, you know, and there's a cave in the rock."

"You couldn't stay there," said Letty.

"Oh yes, I can. I'm tired of this ; and it's just as bad at home. It will be jolly up there ; I can do just as I like. Nobody ever comes, and I can hide in the rock if they do. I dare say in a little while I shall make a raft, and sail about on it ; and then I can fish, you know. You may come with me, if you like, because you told of Gerald."

"I should not like to live in a cave," said Letty, "and I am very fond of grandpapa and Alfred."

"It would be much nicer without them. Fancy nobody ever telling you to do anything you did not want."

“They’ll look for you, you know.”

“They’ll soon think we’re dead—fallen in the river or something—and they’ll put up monuments in the churchyard, I dare say. Won’t it be jolly to come down at night and look at them?”

Letty did not think it would be, and said, “I don’t want to run away, and I wish you wouldn’t. They will only catch you and punish you.”

“No, they won’t, unless you tell.”

“But I ought to tell,” said Letty.

“It would be mean if you did ; I only let you know because I thought we were friends, and so you might come too, if you wanted. Why, *I* wouldn’t be so mean, and I don’t pretend to be as good as you.”

“I don’t like to have naughty secrets ; it’s not fair to make me have them when I don’t want. Go somewhere else, Redfern and then I shan’t know.”

“There is nowhere else to go.”

“Oh, I wish you had not told me. Don’t run away ; it will be horrid in the rocks.”

“No, it won’t. I thought you had some honour. I shall go whether you tell or not,” and Redfern departed, looking quite angry.

He repented, however, and came back in a few minutes.

“Look here, Letty,” he said, “I didn’t mean to be cross, for I know you won’t tell, after all. Good-bye, don’t be vexed. I’ve got twopence-halfpenny left, and I can’t spend it up in the rocks, you know, so I’ll leave it for you. Good-bye.”

He put his coppers in a tea-cup, and ran off as fast as he could, leaving Letty in a miserable state of mind.

She had no more pleasure in the party, and left her tea-things uncounted ; she went about with the awful weight of a wicked

secret on her conscience, and was ashamed to speak to the other children, who looked innocent and happy. Alfred sought her out, and tried to make her play with the others ; but she escaped again as soon as she could, and sat alone under the most distant apple tree.

She did not know what she ought to do ; after Redfern's confidence in her, it seemed impossible to betray him ; yet she was ashamed to meet her grandfather's look when she had such a secret untold. She did not care for Redfern, she was not at all fond of him, yet for his sake she was obliged to incur guilt, when she would never have done it for her own, and to lose that good opinion of everybody about her which she valued so much. Had she been good so long, had they all loved her so much, for this ?—that she must be found at last sharing a wicked secret with the naughty Redfern, helping him



in his bad conduct, and deceiving them all? Yet Redfern had trusted her, and left her twopence-halfpenny in the tea-cup; she did not want his pennies, but she could not tell of him;—what would he think of her if she did? That was the dreadful part of it; to have anybody, even Redfern, expect good things from her and be disappointed, was an impossible idea.

Hitherto her amiability had always made it easier instead of harder to be good; when she had tried to please people, and be kind to them, she had always been praised before. Now everything was changed; she wanted only to do what she was asked, and would get blame every way; she was entangled in a web of deceit and disgrace from which there was no escape. She had also no interest in the matter—she did not *want* to be naughty—that was the worst of it.

She dreaded the time when the other chil-

dren would go, and Redfern's absence must be discovered. At last it came ; they all departed, kissing her before they went, not knowing, she thought, what a naughty girl she was.

“And I don't want to be naughty,” she felt again, bitterly. The path through life that her kindly straightforward nature had taken her along so easily before, had suddenly become crooked and impassable. The love of right and the love of praise had led her on together before ; now they seemed to have divided into two roads, and she could not tell which was which.

When the visitors were all gone, Redfern was missed, and the servants went to look for him in the orchard and gardens, because he was “always in mischief.” No one thought of asking the other children if they knew anything of him, because his ways of late had become so divided from theirs. Letty was

most unhappy while they looked for him ; she could not bear to sit on her grandfather's knee, though he put her there, and wanted to talk to her about the day's events. She slipped away, and went to sit in a dark corner by herself.

At last she could bear it no longer ; she went to Alfred, and whispered : “ Come with me, for I have something to tell grandpapa, and I am frightened.”

So, very quietly in the twilight, she went up to Mr. Hilborough's chair, and stood before him, with Alfred beside her.

“ If you please, grandpapa,” she said, in a voice that trembled, though she tried to be brave, “ I want to tell you that I know where Redfern is.”

“ You, Letty ! Well, where is he ?”

“ Oh, please don't ask me. I can't tell you, because I promised—at least I did not promise, but he asked me to.”

“ Does Alfred know ?”

“ No, nobody but me.”

“ Then you had better tell, my dear.”

“ Oh, I can't, I can't. I don't want to be naughty, but I won't tell of him.”

“ You say you made no promise not to tell.”

“ But he *thought* I would not ; so don't ask me, please.”

“ Why did he tell you ?”

“ He wanted me to go too.”

“ Why have you told me, if you won't tell any more ?”

“ Because I don't want to be naughty ; and it isn't any use looking for him in the garden, for he is not there.”

Mr. Hilborough was unused to being severe with Letty, and he hardly knew how to act ; she was so much disturbed and distressed ; that he was more sorry for her than angry at her obstinate silence.

“Very well, my dear,” he said gravely, “they shall not look in the garden any more. We will wait a little while to see if Redfern comes back, and not ask you to tell of him just yet. He must be sent away if he tries to make you keep his secrets ; and I think if he is in any place where it is not right or safe for him to be, you will feel sorry before long, and come and tell me yourself.”

Letty sobbed a faint little “thank you,” and hoped he would take her on his knee, and console her. He did nothing of the sort, and she crept away to her corner again, and sat there crying quietly. Alfred tried to comfort her, and blamed every one except herself ; but Letty would not be comforted.

“Yes, I am naughty,” she persisted, “I know I am ; and it is very miserable to be naughty. Oh, I wish I might be good and tell.”

The twilight grew grayer ; black clouds had begun to gather, and the fine day threatened to end in a storm. No one was really anxious about Redfern. They thought he knew how to look after himself, and supposed he was only absent on some mischievous expedition, which could not be very mischievous, or Letty would never have been asked to join in it. He would appear again soon, as he always did.

“ I hope Redfern won’t stay away long, if he is out of doors,” observed Mr. Hilborough, as he stood at the window, “ for it is going to rain soon.”

A few flashes of lightning already illuminated the dark clouds at intervals, and the growl of distant thunder was heard among the hills.

Letty had grown very still and quiet in her dark corner ; Alfred thought she was becoming more comforted, but she was only

forming a great and dreadful resolution in her own mind.

“ Alfred,” she said, at last, in a very low tone, “ I can’t bear this any more. I shall go to him.”

“ To uncle ?”

“ No, to Redfern. You must come with me, for I can’t go by myself. I shall tell him that he must come home, or I shall tell.”

“ Where is he ?”

“ I mustn’t tell you ; only you must come. I daren’t go by myself, but I don’t think I shall be frightened with you.”

“ Very well,” said Alfred, “ are you going now ?”

“ Yes, it will be too dark soon.”

They crept quietly out of the room into the hall. There Alfred found his cap, and Letty the poor old hat that had floated in the pond. They had the great prudence to take an umbrella, but they put no cloaks on.

They went quietly along the back passage, and were just escaping out of the back-door when Gerald pounced upon them.

“Where are you two going? I shall tell uncle,” he said, all in one breath.

“No, you mustn’t,” said Letty, “we shall be back soon, and then we will tell ourselves.”

“If you do tell, you shall not play with the new kite I have just made,” said Alfred, warningly, knowing what kind of an argument influenced his cousin most.

They went on then, down the kitchen garden and across the orchard. Darkness was coming on, a wild wind was beginning to blow; they heard the back-door close behind them with a bang.

“Is it far?” asked Alfred.

“Oh, yes; a long way up the hill.”

“Shan’t you be afraid if it gets dark?”

“I don’t know; I must go, you see.

“Are you sure Ref is there?”



“He said he was going.”

“Well, if it rains, we have an umbrella.”

They soon got through the orchard, where the grass had been so yellow in sunshine a little while ago, and was so black in gloom now; beyond that they followed the little stream of the garden through a flat meadow, and then they came to the hillside, and to a larger stream, which made its way down through a narrow gorge, rocky, and green with straight firs, which climbed like steps up its steep sides, and almost repeated their lines.

“We must go up here,” said Letty.

“It’s a very bad road. Shan’t you lose yourself?”

“No; I have been this way twice before. You go up to the top, and then there’s a hill, and then there’s a lake, and it’s there.”

“Very well, we’ll go.”

So they plunged into the darkness of the ravine. It frightened them a little at first,

for the shade under the fir trees was so very black and dismal ; the stream, too, made such a noise close to their ears, and its foam looked white and ghostly in the darkness. The path was very bad, and went close to the stream ; it was a steep and scrambling way round fir trees and over big stones, with ferns in all the cracks. Letty got her foot in one of the cracks once, and once she slipped down one of the big steep stones, and was only saved by a bush from going into the dark stream. Alfred pulled her up, and they both stood still for a minute, clinging together on the rock.

“ I think we had better go back, Letty,” said Alfred.

Letty was trembling, but she did not cry.

“ No, we’ll go on ; it won’t be worse than this ; and I *can’t* go back and not tell.”

As they ascended, it was startling to look down ; the gorge was too steep for them to see many yards below, and their view often ended

in an abrupt edge of stone, from which rose a fir tree, tall, straight, and dark against the sky.

“We mustn’t look down, you know,” explained Letty ; “that always makes it worse.”

“But we shall have to *go* down,” said the cautious Alfred.

“We shall be going home then, so we shan’t mind.”

Without accident they reached the top, and emerged from the narrow gorge, with its black steep sides, and trees darkening them in, on to the gray quiet hill-top. They were glad to escape from that blackness and the noise of the descending stream.

The hill-top had terrors of its own, however ; the stillness and solitude of the place became alarming after a few minutes.

Alfred and Letty stood still, and looked round at the gray lines stretching monotonously around them, marking the bends of the hill, and nothing more.

“Don’t you think you’ll lose yourself?”  
said Alfred.

“I don’t know ; it looks somehow different  
from what I thought.”

“It’s the lake we’re going to ; isn’t it ?”

“Yes, but I don’t know where it is.”

“It doesn’t seem to be anywhere about.”

“I know it isn’t far.”

“I am afraid we shall lose ourselves.”

They stood still for a minute. Letty had  
fast hold of Alfred’s hand, and seemed to  
expect him to help her out of the difficulty.

“You wouldn’t like to go back, I suppose ?”

“Oh yes, I should, very much,” said  
truthful Letty, “but I won’t.”

A distant growl was heard, and a few  
heavy raindrops splashed in their faces.

“That couldn’t be a lion, could it ?” said  
Letty, going closer to Alfred, and feeling that  
all things were possible in this unknown  
land.

“No ; it’s thunder. There’s going to be a storm. We’d better be quick.”

“Yes, if you knew which way to go.”

“Look here,” said Alfred suddenly, “this stream comes out of the lake, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“We’ll go along it then, and we shall come to the lake, and we shan’t lose ourselves that way.”

They started again, following the stream along the hill ; the rain began to come down heavily, but Alfred put up his umbrella, and they felt pretty well protected, till it blew wrong-side out, and would not go right again ; after that they had to go on with both wind and rain in their faces. Letty’s big old hat protected her a little, but Alfred was in a dreary plight. He did not complain, however.

“It seems a long way,” said Letty ; “I did not think it was so far.”

After a twist round a rocky elevation, they

came suddenly upon the lake ; it looked only like a level sheet of blackness at first, but in another moment a flash of lightning illuminated it, and dyed it with a rosy reflection, broken all over by big splashing raindrops.

Letty stood still and trembled. “ Had we better run away ? ” she said, in a frightened voice ; “ do you think the water’s on fire ? ”

“ No,” answered Alfred, “ it’s only the lightning ; I don’t think it will hurt us.”

The darkness had settled down again, looking all the deeper for the momentary light ; they went on round the edge of the black waters, over a path of brown stones. They reached the other side, and there was the hole in the rock that Redfern had called a cave. It looked a black little place, and Letty was almost afraid to go in.

“ Call Redfern,” she whispered.

Alfred called, but there was no answer for a moment ; after that, a voice said, “ Who’s that ? ”

The voice was so quiet, and unlike Redfern's, that Letty was afraid to answer it. Stories of wolves who had devoured persons, and afterwards imitated their voices, returned immediately to her mind. Alfred, however, said, "It's me and Letty. Are you inside?"

The quiet voice said, "Yes," upon which Alfred scrambled into the cave, and pulled Letty in after him. It was too dark for them to see anything at first, and no one spoke.

"Are you here, Ref?" said Alfred again.

"Yes," answered the voice, evidently Redfern's this time; "but I've hurt myself, I think, and I can't get up."

"Are you hurt much?" said Letty, finding her voice again.

"I don't know. There's a stone on my leg; I can't get it off. I was rolling it to make a door, and I pushed it on my foot."

There was something quite unusual in the tone of his voice; it was so faint and spirit-

less. Letty could manage to see him now, lying on the floor in a corner ; and he looked dreadfully pale to her eyes. A big stone lay partly on his foot, partly on the rock, and his little store of apples and tarts were on a ledge above him.

“ Oh, Ref,” said Letty, pityingly, “ could not we push it off for you ?”

“ No, don’t ; don’t touch it. I couldn’t walk, if you did ; and it hurts rather. Couldn’t you bring somebody ?”

“ Oh, I will ; I’ll run back now. Alfred must stay here ; I can go myself.”

“ Oh, Letty, you can’t,” Alfred remonstrated ; “ you’ll lose yourself.”

“ No, I shan’t ; I know the way quite well, now, and Redfern can’t be left by himself, when he’s hurt so. It would be much worse for him than for me.”

“ Then I’ll go, and you shall stay here.”

“ No ; I can run faster than you. I



shouldn't like to stay, it would seem such a long time ; I'd rather go."

Redfern said nothing more ; he was suffering too much pain to want to speak.

" Good-bye, Ref," said Letty. " I'll be very quick ; I will, indeed."

She got out of the cave, and ran along the side of the lake ; the thunder growled a little still, and occasional flashes revealed the hill before her, raising also out of the darkness black mounds and steep rocks, which had seemed to have no existence before. These sudden revelations alarmed her a great deal ; but she ran on, leaving the lake at last behind her, and going on with the stream to the top of the gorge. The descent of the gorge was the worst part of her journey. The trees seemed to nod at her, strange shadows started into existence all about her pathway, mysterious sounds rose suddenly from the trees to startle her, the foam flashed whiter

than ever, and the noise of the stream was sometimes terribly loud. The fear of falling had left her; she was in too great haste to get down to think how it was to be done. She ran, and scrambled, and slipped, and caught herself by the trees, and fell down and got up again, but never to hurt herself much, and always to go on as fast as ever. At last out of that dreadful gorge of shadows and noises, she got down into the calm level of the fields below. She ran through them, and across the orchard, feeling that she should cry in a minute, but would not begin yet. The back door was open, and a flood of light and a sound of voices came through it. Oh, what a haven of safety and comfort it looked after her journey!

She ran in breathlessly, past the kitchen door, through which the servants saw her flying on, wet, and torn and pale, like a little ghost in her pretty white dress; she could

scarcely see for the light, but she ran through the hall to the library ; there she met Mr. Hilborough at the door, coming out in an overcoat, with his hat on.

“Oh, grandpapa!” she said, “come back with me. Redfern’s hurt, and I think he will die.”

Mr. Hilborough gazed at the white little apparition for a moment, then he took her up in his arms and kissed her silently.

“Will you come?” said Letty, impatiently ; “he is in the cave on the hill by the lake, and a stone fell on his foot, and he can’t get up, and somebody must go and take it off, and carry him down, or he will die. I will show you the way.”

She gazed at him earnestly, expecting him to start that minute.

“How do you know? where have you been?” he said, feeling her little white stockings and cold hands.

“I have been there. I went to tell Red-

fern that I must tell you, and I asked Alfred to go with me. Alfred is there now, because Ref was hurt, and could not come away, and I have run home to bring somebody."

She put her head down on his shoulder for a minute and cried quietly, trying to keep back her sobs, and be brave again. Mr. Hilborough carried her into the kitchen, where there was a fire, and warmed her feet, the women running about to get her dry socks and shoes. When these were put on, and her feet began to feel warm and comfortable, she recovered, and remembered her mission again.

"Aren't you going?" she asked anxiously. "Now? Soon? It will seem a long time; and," she added, very earnestly, "they will think I didn't run."

"I will go as soon as possible," said Mr. Hilborough; "if you are to show me the way, you must have some dry things on first; and I must send for John to go, too."

Seeing that further appeal would be useless, Letty tried to be patient ; when she had got on dry clothes, thick boots, and a cloak and hood, she felt so warm and comfortable, that it was impossible to regret the change ; but she thought with contrition of the two boys waiting in the cave.

She had not really been home more than a quarter of an hour before she started again. Her grandfather took her in his arms and led the way ; two men-servants followed with lanterns, so that Letty felt well protected and perfectly safe.

Letty was so impatient of repose, and so anxious to walk, that Mr. Hilborough soon let her do so ; when they came to the gorge, however, he said it was not safe for her to scramble up there, and she was carried all the way to the top of the hill.

“ You did not come down here alone, and in the dark ?” Mr. Hilborough asked.

“ Yes, I did.”

“ Were you not afraid ?”

“ I don’t remember ; I was wanting to get on so fast.”

“ What made you go such a way, even with Alfred ?”

“ I didn’t want to be naughty any more, and not tell. But I couldn’t tell of Redfern without letting him know, when he thought I shouldn’t.”

“ You must never do such a thing again, even in the daytime. I shall never think you safe if you do. Promise me you won’t.”

“ Oh, I had rather not, a great deal. Was it naughty, too, to come ?”

“ You ought not to have done it ; I know best what is safe for you ; you must tell me when you are in any trouble again, and not try to get out of it yourself.”

“ What could I do but come ?”

“ You should have told me.”

“But what would Redfern have thought?”

“It doesn’t matter what a naughty boy like Redfern thinks.”

“Doesn’t it?” said Letty, with a sigh. The conversation seemed finished; but she added, after a pause, “He seemed hurt so much; I hope he isn’t thinking I didn’t run.”

They went on silently for a few moments, then Letty spoke again: “I did run, really, all the way,” she said, looking up earnestly to her grandfather, “even when it lightened, and black hills came up in front, and went away again all at once, and when dark things moved about under the trees; I never stopped at all. I said I could run faster than Alfred, and I tried to.”

“I am glad you are safe after it,” said Mr. Hilborough quietly.

The way seemed much shorter than it had done before; Letty ran on bravely, anxious to lose no time. The black lake was blacker than ever when they reached it.

“However did you find your way?” said Mr. Hilborough; “you might have lost yourselves for hours on these hills.”

“It was Alfred. He found out somehow, and we went by the brook.”

The cave was reached at last, and Alfred scrambled out eagerly at the sound of voices.

“Oh, Letty,” he said, “I thought you were lost.”

“Is Redfern better?”

“I don’t know. He won’t talk.”

Redfern lay still in the cave, grimly silent. He had not anticipated needing again so soon the world he had forsaken, and its kindness was bitterness to him.

“Well, my boy,” said Mr. Hilborough, gravely, “you have found a strange way of enjoying yourself.”

Redfern felt angry at the sarcastic remark, and wished he could run away again; but he had to be patient. They lifted the stone off



his foot, and found that it was very much crushed and hurt; to walk on it would be impossible for a long time. One of the men carried him home, and Redfern had enough to do to bear the pain that movement caused him, without being angry at his humiliating helplessness.

Letty and Alfred kept close to one another all the way home. They felt that they had gone through great adventures together, and afterwards apart, and that no one else could understand how nice it was to be safe.

Poor Redfern went out of their interests again. He was put to bed, and the doctor came to see him; they heard that he was sure to get better, so dismissed him from their minds, and sat close together by the fire rehearsing their adventures, while Gerald sat and gazed with open mouth, and was glad he had not told, and so prevented their departure.

“Did you see, Alfred,——” and “Do you

remember, Letty,——,” went on for a long time, as they recalled and related everything they had seen or imagined.

Mr. Hilborough put an end to their exciting conversation, with all its marvels and its interjections. He gave them a solemn lecture upon the adventure—so very solemn, that Gerald secretly rejoiced that nobody had happened to mention that he knew of their departure on the expedition. The children had been missed a short time before Letty’s return, and Mr. Hilborough had been out to seek them ; Gerald had meditated the revelation of what he knew, but now he was glad to think that his character remained on this occasion intact, and that he was actually the only child in the house who was not in any way to blame. It was not often that this was his position. He exulted in it accordingly.

## CHAPTER V.

THE LAST OF THE CHILDREN, AND THEIR  
HISTORY.

THE time had nearly come now for the children to be separated, not to meet again for ten years in that old garden under the hill. Alfred and Gerald were soon to go home and return to their different schools, and Mr. Hilborough and all the household at Monkholme had had enough of Redfern. If he had been fit to send home, no doubt they would have said good-bye to him the next day ; as it was, Mr. Hilborough decided that the responsibility of his presence was more than he could do with, and that

he must go as soon as he should be well enough.

Redfern's mother arrived to nurse him. Letty had never seen her before. She thought her rather a curious lady, not at all like what Ref's mamma might be expected to be. Mrs. James Hilborough was a little woman with light hair and a pale disconsolate face. She cried a great deal when first she arrived, and said that nobody ever was so unfortunate as Redfern; nobody cared about him, she was sure, and if she had been there this would never have happened. He *might* seem sulky to any one who treated him unkindly, but there never was a boy more easily led. She thought it was not right for everybody to blame him, but persons who could not agree with their own children were not likely to think much of other people's boys, and she should know whether to trust him out of her care again.

All this was said to Mr. Hilborough with some tears and many sighs, and repeated refusals to take refreshment or consolation of any sort.

Letty thought that her grandpapa looked vexed somehow, though he was very quiet and polite — indeed, quite grand in his manner. Mrs. James Hilborough did not seem very much pleased to make acquaintance with the little girl. She kissed her coldly, and remarked that some people no doubt were more fortunate than she was in having children who could keep their naughty ways secret, and flatter people's fancies; she was glad to say that *her* children were all straightforward, though they might have to lose some friends for it.

Her opinions appeared, however, to have changed considerably when she came downstairs again after seeing her injured son.

He had declined to say he should be glad to go home again ; he had also told his mother that she was a goose to cry, and that if he didn't cry, he couldn't see why she should ; he didn't suppose the pain in his foot hurt *her*.

After this interview she stated that no woman was so unfortunate in her children as she was ; no one could tell how fond she had been of that boy, and now he was as ungrateful as ~~he~~ could be. He might have pleased his uncle and stayed at Monkholme, but he would be naughty and have his own way, and this was the result.

When Redfern was better, Mr. James Hilborough, his father, came to take him and his mother home. Mr. James was very kind to Letty, but she did not become at all fond of him. He was rather like her grandfather, but much younger. His manners were sterner and his look less kindly. He

never seemed cross, as her grandfather was sometimes, and he treated the weakness of his wife with a calm contempt that Letty was too young to understand, though it filled her with a vague distrust. He never reasoned with Mrs. James on her follies; or explained his own proceedings; he let her talk, and, with a polite superiority, told her how to act.

There was a severe irony too in his manner to his son, that seemed especially irritating to Redfern; there had been a tinge of it in Mr. Hilborough's treatment of him, but it was more strongly developed in Mr. James's. Letty could see Redfern watching his father sometimes with a strange look of fascinated repulsion. Yet his father was always just to him; like all the Hilboroughs, he was an intensely religious man, self-denying and conscientious. He was stern and correct in his dogmatic beliefs, yet he denied

the doctrines of Christ by his strongly-rooted contempt for human nature, and broke the law of the Gospel by his severity in righteousness. He corrected, never in love, and never in anger, but always in cynicism and incredulity of good.

“Didn’t you hate your father?” Redfern asked Letty once.

“No, no!” said Letty in horror; “I loved him more than any one else in the world.”

“I hate mine. Sometimes, when he says things, I wish I could kill him. I do really, though I don’t speak. I hope when I grow up I shall be as clever as he is, then I can say things like he does, and make him feel, oh! wicked like I do. I wish I could make him hate me.”

“Oh, Redfern! why?”

“Then he would be miserable, as I am when I hate him and I daren’t touch him;



he daren't hurt me, you know, or he wouldn't go to heaven. I'm glad I don't care about heaven, and then I needn't mind when I'm big enough. I shouldn't like to go there. Well, you wouldn't, you know, Letty, if some one you hated was going."

"He doesn't punish you much."

"I don't think I should mind so much if he beat me; then I might think he was vexed; but he never is. I can't vex him; he doesn't care what I do. I wish I could do something to make him think I'm not just a little toad, but a big snake or something."

"Do you love your mamma?"

Redfern laughed.

"Oh! she's a silly. I don't mind her. I can frighten her directly; and she only cries if I'm naughty, or else scolds. Such stuff she talks when she scolds," he observed with contempt, for the lesson of his father's

cynical severity had not been lost upon him.

Redfern was soon taken home. He had to walk still with a crutch, and the doctor said the hurt would probably leave a little lameness for life. He was unwilling to go at the last.

“It’s horrid here,” he said, “but then it’s more horrid at home. The children there tell of me always if I’m naughty, and they learn hymns as much as Gerald, and they cry if I tease them the least bit.”

“You should not tease them,” said Letty, who had the courage still to make moral observations, in spite of the adventure of the fish-pond.

“I suppose, Letty, you’re glad I’m going?”

“Well,” said Letty, who could not help being truthful, though she hated to be unkind, “I’m sorry you got hurt, and so had to be taken away.”

Redfern had half hoped for another answer; he was a lonely little soul, though he had adopted wickedness for his companion. He was independent, however, to the end.

“Nobody ever was sorry when I went away from anywhere,” he replied, “and I’m very glad they weren’t.”

He departed dismally with his parents and his crutches, all four things he hated, chains that bound him down, yet helps that he absolutely needed. The perfect dependence of childhood was a galling thing to his nature.

After that Gerald was the next to go. He cried greatly at his departure, and ate many sandwiches and sweetmeats on the way home.

The garden was a quiet place afterwards. Letty had especially begged that Alfred might stay a little longer, so he remained

a week after the others went. The two children had a pleasant time in those last days ; there was nobody to tease or vex them ; they were openly glad that Redfern had gone, and rejoiced over his absence continually, and they were never heard to regret the loss of Gerald. They played together in the garden, and had no scoldings nor punishments to dread afterwards ; by the brown and golden brook, among the fallen leaves of the orchard, on the sunny lawn, all was safe and pleasant for them, and Mr. Hilborough had never reason to be anxious or angry about their conduct. They were both troubled when the parting came, but Letty grieved the most. The garden would be so lonely without Alfred to play with.

Alfred went away with an invitation to spend all his future holidays at Monkholme ; he was the only one of the three boys who was asked to repeat his visit there ; but he

had pleased both Mr. Hilborough and Letty.

So, after that, the garden belonged to Letty alone ; she was a quiet little girl, who spent a quiet life there, and was very happy. All her life afterwards she ruled at Monkholme, and made a very gracious queen of it. There were many things she wanted altered, and she always had her way. Before long the hedge was pulled up from before the front windows, “Because, grandpapa, you can’t see me playing in the garden, you know, when you are in the house.” And the placard, with its inscription, “To be sold, for building upon,” was taken down.

The meaning of these mysterious institutions of the place was long unknown to Letty, but she understood them as she grew older and learnt the history of it.

Mr. Hilborough was the oldest of a large family of sons. Monkholme, and much land

in the neighbourhood, had come to him by inheritance ; he had also married a lady with a fortune. He had therefore never had any need to go into the world to make money, but his brothers had all dispersed to enter different professions ; and though they all lived as gentlemen, having the nature and habits of a superior class, they were none of them very successful in their affairs, and grew old without becoming rich.

Mr. Hilborough married long before any of the others, and he had one son. This son was unlike his father and uncles. The Hilboroughs were a well-bred, handsome, self-possessed, and sternly religious race. As young men, they adopted no wild ways, and as they grew older their propriety seemed always to deepen into severity. They were capable of feeling intensely, but they never showed sentiment or emotion, and their own self-control sometimes developed self-contempt

for others. They were all tall, with fair hair, and cold, gray eyes. Mr. Hilborough's son, on the contrary, was very small and dark, and of an excitable nature. He was a scape-grace in his youth, and somewhat of a sceptic. He hated propriety and control, and had a very violent temper. His father was too correct and self-governed to understand him, but he was fortunate in his mother.

She was a sweet, quiet woman, who talked little, and judged no one severely. She was grieved when he did wrong, but never angry; she was always kind, and always forgave him, though she never professed to think his offences small. She was reticent and self-denying, but, in spite of her quietness, he always knew that she loved him very much.

While she lived his life was not very difficult to him; she died when he was fourteen years old, and he seemed lost and

miserable for some time afterwards. He did no very wrong things, but he was ungracious, self-willed, and given to peculiar actions ; he always had secretly a high ideal of womanhood, and to have loved happily might have reduced the confusion of his life to order.

Before he came of age he fell in love with a girl in the neighbourhood, and as all his conduct ran into extremes, his passion for her was intense. His father was much opposed to the match, for the girl, though clever and attractive, was not a woman apparently of a faithful, helpful nature ; she loved society and praise, and had no deeper and better part in her character. Mr. Hilborough, however, was anxious to be just ; his son's character was a mystery and a trouble to him, but as long as he did no wrong he desired to treat him kindly, and meet all his reasonable wishes. Therefore,



at a great sacrifice of his own feelings, he made no objection to the proposed match, treated the young lady with courtesy and kindness, and told his son that he might marry her, and bring her home to Monkholme as soon as he liked.

The young lady was not without opinions and desires of her own, and she stated them very freely. She suggested that many alterations should be made at Monkholme before she came to it; Edgar Hilborough was eager to do all she wished, and Mr. Hilborough gave way, too, in this matter.

It was for Edgar's betrothed, then, that the garden was altered, and laid out in terraces and walks, and that more gables and wings were added to the house; day after day the alterations went on, and Edgar hoped they soon would be finished, and his home ready for his bride. Mr. Hilborough hoped, too, that the preparations would be

over before long, and his old, quiet time would return.

The bride never came to her garden, however. Late in the summer, at the close of which she was to have been married, Edgar Hilborough broke off his engagement.

He did it suddenly, and no one knew why. The young lady herself was much afflicted, and her parents indignant; Mr. Hilborough was angry, and the whole neighbourhood was scandalized, but Edgar would tell his reasons to nobody. A fit of his old violent temper seemed to have seized him, followed by the customary obstinate moodiness.

Mr. Hilborough was more angry than any one else; all his self-denial was thrown away, the lady was ill-treated, and his son's character injured among all his friends. He insisted on an explanation, and Edgar would give him none. Edgar was in a bitter frame of mind; he declined to give any reason for

his conduct, and, in anger and disgust, left his father's house and the neighbourhood altogether.

A short time afterwards he completed his strange behaviour by marrying a widow who was ten years older than himself, and who had three children.

It was hard for his father to forgive this last piece of folly. If Mr. Hilborough had known that Edgar had been cruelly hurt where he had only seemed unreasonably self-willed, he might never have blamed him so much.

Edgar had discovered that the lady he should have married had been secretly engaged to two men before he proposed to her, and that she had not broken off the last engagement till some time after she had accepted him.

He could not forgive her or love her again, but he never told how he had been deceived ;

he felt himself bound in honour not to reveal her conduct, and let his own temper, which was violent enough at the time, stand for all explanation. He was too much embittered to care what became of him afterwards.

Mr. Hilborough did not invite his son back to Monkholme, and disliked all sight of the garden that had been laid out with so much trouble for the bride he would not bring. The old man was determined that no other wife of his should come to take possession of it; he wanted to get rid of it altogether, as a thing that reminded him of useless sacrifice and slighted kindness. He let it go to ruin, he locked the entrance to it, and no gardener ever went in; then it was that he planted the hedge to shut out the view of it from his window, and put up the board offering it for sale.

That was the history of the garden before the children came to it.

Edgar Hilborough had only one child, the little girl whom he called Violet, and he never returned to live at Monkholme. There was a partial reconciliation with his father, and twice he went over to see him; once he took Letty. Before he died, his father promised to take care of his little girl, and provide for her welfare. So Letty left her mother and sisters (to whom Mr. Hilborough gave a small competency, though he never would see them), and went to live with the old man at Monkholme.

Mr. Hilborough had no intention of leaving the house and land to her; he wished that to go to some one whose children would bear his own name. He had many nephews and nieces, though he saw little of them, and when Letty first came to him, he invited the three eldest boys of his three married brothers to stay at Monkholme for a few weeks. Perhaps he had an idea that Letty

might some day marry one of them ; certainly, he intended to leave his landed property to one. He thought principally of Redfern, who was the son of the brother nearest to him in age ; but Redfern's conduct spoilt his plans, to the grievous disappointment of Mrs. James Hilborough, who had hoped to see her naughty boy his uncle's favourite, and heir of Monkholme. When she took him away, she knew that all such hopes were over.

Mr. Hilborough was very reticent, and spoke of his plans to nobody. He only invited Alfred to come again to Monkholme, and kept Letty with him.

Letty was happy there. She was accustomed to live only with grown-up people, and she had dwelt in a town before, so she delighted in the garden and fields. The separation from her mother was the less grievous, because Mrs. Edgar Hilborough

had always been absorbed in her other children, especially in her son. Letty was unlike her half-sisters ; she was one of those fair, sweet, and happy children whose lot always seems to fall in pleasant places ; she had a habit of enjoying everything, and liking everybody, which made her always seem fortune's favourite ; and she had frank and gentle manners, which made everyone like her, so that her way through life looked unfairly pleasant. Mrs. Edgar's other children were always being discontented or unfortunate, vexing somebody, or getting into some trouble, and her tenderness went to them, instead of to the cheerful Letty, the more so as Edgar was wholly devoted to his little girl, and had nothing but kindness and patience to give to his wife and her children.

Letty's memories of her father were very sweet. She had no recollection of harsh temper, or selfish ways in him. After his

marriage, Edgar's character settled into something new ; he became a silent, retiring, and melancholy man. The scepticism of his early years, which had been but an intense and impatient love of truth which he could not reach, and a hatred of false forms that pressed about him, changed gradually, and none of his cousins were brought up in more religious reverence and love of good things, than was his little girl. He was never weary of teaching her himself, and her love of him and belief in all he said were very great. While Redfern grew wicked, and Alfred grew indifferent, and Gerald grew hypocritical under their severe religious training, Letty alone had it planted so deeply that, under all the childish faults twisting about it, it was part of her life, something that she held fast to, because it was indissolubly connected with her father.

The tenderness of his nature was never



lavished on any one but Letty. After his great disappointment, his temper changed; not hoping, he seemed not to struggle any more against adverse characters and circumstances; he denied himself, and gave to others all except his love, and that he saved for his child. The rigid love of right which developed unconscious cynicism and contempt for failing human nature in his father and uncle, only made him pitiful and kindly to the world, which was somehow so sadly wrong and selfish. His angry protests and dissatisfaction in early youth arose from the untrained passion of his love for what was good; and afterwards, when a personal wrong had taken away the disinterested fervour of his impatience, when suffering had taught him that mysterious consolation which lies at the end of all misery, and which makes wrong done to ourselves often seem so much less unjust than wrong to

others—then he ceased to protest, and only acted, he was content to love the right himself, instead of impatiently forcing it on mankind. Yet, though every one approved of him, he was not a man whom many people loved. His compassionate kindness, which was not precisely sympathy, removed him from the ordinary intercourse of liking and disagreement, almost as much as the contemptuous severity of others of the Hilboroughs did ; and when he died, there was only his affection for Letty to leave any trace of the tenderness which arose from love in his heart, though of self-denial which arose from virtue, and of kindness which arose from compassion, there was a great deal.

Letty's love for her father made her intercourse with her grandfather easier ; the best affection of her life had not been given to her mother, so she missed the tenderness of women less than might have been ex-

pected. Her affection for her grandfather was perfectly fearless, so that his severity was disarmed at first; he did not know how to be stern where sternness was so completely unexpected. Letty loved him, and laughed at him, and told him all her hopes and fears and wishes, and ruled him completely, though she did not know it.

In the house and garden she had her own way: the swans came back to the pond, and the peacocks to the lawn; she loved the old place very much, so little was altered, though some things were added. She grew up there from childhood to womanhood, getting taller than the roses; the paths in the shrubbery were at last almost too narrow for her sweeping dresses, while the swing was taken down from the orchard, and a summer-house put there instead.

She had a sunny, happy life, having no doubts, difficulties, nor dislikes. She was

formed to be prosperous, for prosperity only made her kinder and simpler in her self-forgetfulness. Through the sunny spring and the golden autumn days she lived on at Monkholme ; every winter only she went home to her mother's house, and she never stayed long, for life there was a little perplexing to her, and different from what she found it at Monkholme. Alfred came twice every year, and was always welcomed, both by Letty and Mr. Hilborough—he was so good-natured, so pleasant, and so handsome, that everybody was glad to see him. Redfern and Gerald were only heard of in occasional letters from their parents.

So the years went on, and the children grew up to manhood and womanhood, while the garden, which was always changing so much faster than they, remained still the same at the end.



## PART II.

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### LOVE INSTEAD OF SOLITUDE.

“For indeed,  
If now you’d stoop so low to take my love  
And use it roughly, without stint or spare,  
As men use common things with more behind  
(And in this ever would be more behind),  
To any mean and ordinary end,  
The joy would set me like a star in heaven.”

MRS. E. B. BROWNING.



## CHAPTER I.

*A MEETING IN THE GARDEN.*

TWELVE years afterwards the children, children no longer, met again in the old garden.

It was sunny autumn weather ; all up the hill-side, behind the house, the many-coloured trees climbed to the gray rocks above ; the beeches and the birches seemed to have caught fire in the hot sunlight, and were burning away in autumnal tints of brown and gold ; but the firs scattered amongst them were still darkly, blackly green, and the lime trees were almost bare.

Letty was in the garden with Alfred ; she



had been tying up the China asters, that began to droop before they faded. Now they waited for a visitor who was to come that afternoon.

As the two stood together, it seemed that Alfred still had all the beauty : he was tall and well-made, but when he moved there was a slight appearance of indolence in his actions ; he had a handsome face, and large gray eyes that were a little too calm and quiet, and there was still a golden tinge in his thick brown hair. Whenever he and Letty appeared together the first impression they produced was expressed by, “ What a handsome young man ! and quite an ordinary girl ! ”

But afterwards the impression changed. Alfred’s striking appearance seemed to fade away, and Letty was noticed and admired, while he stood by, forgotten.

Letty was not tall, or little, or pretty, or

ugly, or remarkable personally in any way. She had a pleasant freshness of youth and health about her, a straight lithe form, and manners so simple that no one thought of admiring them. She had hair of a light golden-brown, that waved back from her forehead, a fair complexion, gray eyes, not remarkable either for colour or size, and regular features. Altogether, there was nothing strikingly beautiful about her.

Yet she was never an insignificant person in any room ; the old unconsciousness of self and gentleness for others remained with her still, and there was so much sweetness in her smile, such candour and kindness in her eyes, that her face was a very attractive one, and won many friends for her.

Nobody had ever accused Letty of being a clever girl, she had been brought up as girls are, and had been taught a little of many things, not much of any. She

could read a little French, and had tried to paint pictures, but failed signally ; she had read a great many English books, however, and spent many hours playing to herself on her beautiful piano in the drawing-room ; for Letty had a taste for music, and only in its harmony had she any way of expressing all the passionate love of beautiful things that lay under her sunny contented nature.

She was not a clever girl, and never said clever things, but her conversation was one of the greatest charms about her. Mothers talked to her of their children whom she had never seen, and children of the toys she had never cared to play with ; young men talked to her of hunting, though she knew nothing of it ; old men of their travels, though she had rarely left her home, and no one found her dull, however strange the subject was to her ; she was not merely a good listener, for she spoke always as much as she heard, but

she had ready sympathy in all that had a human interest, and a directness and courage combined with so much friendliness, that her talk, being so merely true and kindly, was better than if it had been learned or witty.

She was just one of those true and tender women who never say or do anything remarkable, yet who impress all with a sense of strong, though unobtrusive character, and gain an influence and authority wherever they go, though they seem to claim none.

The young men who knew her, called her very pretty; the women said, "No, she is not really pretty; only she is very nice," and the men believed them jealous, and were silent, imagining that their own praise was the highest.

Letty waited in the garden, and she was waiting for Redfern; he was to come to Monkholme that day, and Gerald was expected the day after.

Redfern had not fulfilled the promise of his youth and grown up into a wild young man ; indeed, he bore rather a good character among his friends, though they thought him odd and moody. It was said that he had been a good son to his mother since his father died ; two little sisters had been staying with Letty that summer, and had spoken of him with nothing but love and admiration.

Redfern had wished to be an artist, and had devoted some time to painting, but he had given up his profession on his father's death, and taken a situation as clerk and foreign correspondent instead ; he was said to be a clever young man, and obtained a salary of two hundred a year, on which his mother and his little sisters and brothers lived. When Mr. Hilborough talked of making some provision for his brother's widow, Redfern wrote and thanked him, but

observed that "she had a son able and willing to work for her." Mrs. Hilborough lamented this rash statement, and grumbled and protested many a time, but Mr. Hilborough was not displeased. When Letty remarked to him with pitying wonder in her eyes :

"But Redfern is so young ; how can he keep them all ?" he had answered :

"Let the lad alone, he will do well after all, I think, and will be none the worse for this at the end."

"He's tired of daubing colours, I dare say," Alfred said of his cousin. "It always seemed to me a stupid sort of work for a man."

So Redfern came back to Monkholme ; he walked up the lane where he had rescued the bilberries ; he was alone, and he carried his own portmanteau. He came quietly along between the russet hedges, a sombre

and solitary figure, with a grave, dark face, yet a buoyancy of youth in his gait that did not altogether agree with it.

Letty came out on the lawn to meet him, with Alfred beside her ; she was a pleasant picture of youth and sweetness, as she walked over the sunny grass, holding her muslin skirts over her arm. Alfred was with her, making her look small beside his tall figure, and almost pale by contrast to his beautiful brilliant colour. His hair, too, made hers look too light, and the tender sweetness of her gray eyes was not so remarkable at first as the brightness of his.

Redfern was disappointed. Letty had almost the reputation of a beauty—certainly he had heard her spoken of as being universally admired ; he had an artist's love for beautiful things, and the colour of her cheeks, though clear and fair, might have been deeper, her hair a richer golden, her

eyes a little larger, and their lashes longer and darker. Alfred looked a splendid young fellow, but she was only commonplace.

She came to meet him ; she put out her hand and looked in his face with grave clear eyes, and the sweetness of a smile about her mouth ; she said :

“ You have had a long journey ; are you not tired ? You know me, I suppose ; I am Violet.”

Redfern forgot her reputation for beauty and his disappointment. The feeling of isolation and loneliness which had oppressed him in the lane had gone suddenly ; he seemed to know the garden and house no longer as an old memory connected with things lost and things destroyed, he was at home there, and he knew Letty perfectly well ; he did not feel a stranger any more.



“Thank you, I am not tired. Yes, I remember you, you are Letty.”

He glanced at her quickly, and then away again, though she did not seem afraid of his scrutiny.

Alfred shook hands with him, and spoke in a friendly manner; Letty turned round and walked back to the house with them both. It was she who talked as they went along. She asked after Redfern's mother and sisters; she spoke in a familiar and interested way, and looked at him frankly when she did so, though he avoided looking much at her, for he had all the consciousness she was so free from; he was anxious to see what she was really like, and was afraid of gazing rudely, while she turned her eyes to him fearlessly, not wondering what he might think of it, because she never imagined he would think of it at all. Alfred was quiet; already it was evident how much—tall and

handsome youth as he was, he was a mere attendant upon Letty. He was just what he had been in boyhood—brave, kind, truthful and affectionate ; but he had that absence of self-assertion which caused him often to be left out where inferior men found places ; it might be amiability, or humility, or indolence that caused him to obtain so little from his many advantages, it was more probably a want of earnestness, for we cannot be amiably passive or humbly passive, even in abstaining from reaching good things for ourselves, if we feel the worth of the good things strongly.

Redfern discovered no more of Letty's face in that walk to the house than the sweetness of her eyes and mouth, but she knew him already off by heart. He was brown still—eyes, hair and face ; he had lost that watching look of restless mischief ; he had a quiet expression, and looked down as

he walked ; still he had a half-impatient way of glancing, and a manner as of wishing to avoid everyone, a kind of intimation, “ I am a surly creature, keep away from me ;” but Letty had detected the kindness in his eyes which made children and animals mysteriously his friends.

He had not fulfilled his promise of height—or it did not appear so beside the tall Alfred—and he limped a little as he walked, the result of his accident on the hills. Unlike Letty, he was much better-looking than any one imagined him to be ; he had good features, but he made no use of them, and so he passed as plain-looking when, if he had looked and smiled more, he might have been considered almost handsome.

Letty seemed to feel no shyness and strangeness in welcoming him to Monkholme ; she took her place there as the mistress of it, simply and naturally, though

she knew that it might possibly some day be his instead of hers ; more probably, she supposed, however, it would be Alfred's ; such contingencies had nothing to do with the present, and did not affect her at all.

The room she had assigned to him faced the sunny south, looking on to the lawn, where the slow swans floated over the pond ; the window was open, and the sound of the birds came in from the garden with Letty's voice and laughter as she walked there with Alfred.

The first feeling of loneliness and incongruity came to Redfern then. A pleasant house, so well ordered by such a sweet woman, had seemed to him a delightful place of rest while she looked at him with those unconscious eyes, and spoke in that friendly voice, recognising, apparently, no possibility but that of equality and kindness ; now, when he saw her among the roses, her

hand on Alfred's arm, laughing and telling him of her interests and plans, the old consciousness of his own alien nature came back to him: those two in the garden belonged to the world of youth, happiness and affection, and he had always seemed out of tune with that world; he had avoided it as a thing to which he had no affinity, and it had seemed to look askance at him.

When he went downstairs to the drawing-room, Letty was alone there, playing on the piano; the music repelled instead of attracting him. It came through the door with the sweet scents from the open window, speaking to him of the world of 'repose, beauty and quiet, that he had suddenly come to from his city home, and that seemed to him a dangerous land, full of treacherous delights. He went in, however, walking across the room and taking up a book to read; Letty played to the end of her piece, softly, as if it

spoke to her, and she wished to keep it to herself, rather slowly, as if she loved it, and lingered before ending. Then she turned round on the stool to face Redfern, and smiled.

He was a little surprised, for he had looked up as the music stopped, and he was a little embarrassed. Smiles did not come to him naturally without any cause; he had never practised them as a greeting, or used them as a communication, and he hardly knew how to answer one given to him so suddenly out of the mere sympathy of youth and kindness.

Letty was unconscious of her smile, and unaware of his perplexity; she sat with her hands folded on her knees in the simplicity of attitude that belonged to her, she continued to look at him with her old directness, and she asked :

“ Have you seen grandpapa yet ? ”

“No, I did not know where to find him.”

“He will be in the library ; you might go to him presently, he is always there a little while before dinner. Do you remember the library ?”

“Very well,” said Redfern ; he had often been sent there to receive punishments.

“Do you like your room ? Your old one at the back of the house was rather sunless. It was very easy to get down from the window there,” she added, with a smile, “but that was its only advantage ; I dare say you will prefer coming down by the stairs always now.”

“I think so.” He did not know what more to say ; he was perplexed by the contradictions in her conversation. It seemed inconsiderate to remind him so soon of his old evil ways, yet she looked quite unconscious

of unkindness. "I like my new room very much," he said.

"When you want books in the library, you will always be able to get them, and you can go there if ever you want to be quiet; I never hardly come."

He was puzzled again; he had always understood, though he knew nothing personally of those things, that young men were required to say polite things to young ladies, but Violet seemed to expect nothing of the sort; she considerately offered her own occasional absence as a privilege. He thought it best to imitate her simplicity, and only said, "Thank you."

"There are plenty of books there that you will like, old-fashioned, and clever——"

"I am not aware that I am old-fashioned and clever, to like such books," he said, with gravity.

Letty looked at his face and saw amuse-



ment shining in his eyes; she laughed frankly, and he laughed too, and after that he seemed to know her better.

“Men do like such books,” said Violet, “but I have some books of my own, if you get tired of the clever ones, nice new ones; but only women’s books, you know.”

“And what sort of books are those?” Redfern inquired.

“All about nothing in particular, and things that never happened; none of them really about solid facts that are put down.”

“No history then?” said Redfern.

“No,” answered Letty; “some lives, perhaps, and even some travels.”

“No science?”

“Oh no; none.”

“Still you have a good deal left. Any philosophy?”

“ I don’t quite know. Would it be very wrong of me if I had ?”

“ How wrong ?”

“ Oh,” said Letty, solemnly, “ stealing your rights, you know ; trespassing on your property ; neglecting the house, all that strong-minded sort of thing.”

“ Nonsense!” answered Redfern, with much impatience ; “ the house does not look neglected ; it is anything but that.”

“ As if you could know ! a man !” Letty retorted ; but she looked pleased, like a child who is praised.

“ I should like to see your books,” Redfern said with curiosity.

“ You shall some day. There is a tiny room over the hall ; if you knock at the door there, I will let you in ; some morning, perhaps, when you are tired of being learned in the library, and putting all sorts of things

in your head that will never be wanted there."

"How do you know no one will want them?"

"Some one may," she said sagely. "I can't tell, I'm sure; but I never heard of any one who did."

"What are they? and why do you think I've got them?"

"I can't answer either question, I know one young man who has a great deal in his mind, and nothing ever comes out; he can hardly say how do you do."

"Like me, I suppose."

"Not quite so bad as that; but still," and she smiled a little, "I don't think you would talk very much, if I did not make you."

"Thank you," said Redfern, rather curtly, going back to his book.

Letty was surprised, but not much dis-

turbed. She walked to the window and leaned through it; the pigeons flying about came fluttering round her, and she spoke to them and seemed satisfied with their society. When she turned round again, Redfern was looking at her.

“Have you looked through your book?” she asked at once; “there is another somewhere, with illustrations on the same subject, I will get it for you.”

She crossed the room and looked in a cabinet, found the book, and brought it to him.

“Don’t trouble—for me—you should not,” said Redfern, looking shocked at himself; for in her pretty muslin dress, moving about so softly in her well-ordered drawing-room, she looked to him really the sort of person to be waited upon, and treated very politely, though she did not seem to think so herself.

“That is nothing. Here is Alfred. Will you go and ask if grandpapa would like to see Redfern now?”

She made her requests as simply as she gave her attentions, and Alfred went at once. He came back to say that Mr. Hilborough would see his nephew in the library, and as Redfern went out of the room, he saw Alfred putting away Violet’s music and getting her a chair, things he had not thought of doing himself.

“He is made for that sort of thing,” thought Redfern; “and he means to do it all his life. They will be married some day, I suppose. An unequal match, as usual, and she will have the worst of it.”

When Alfred and Violet went in to dinner, Mr. Hilborough and Redfern were coming out of the library together. Letty was surprised to see her grandfather talking with a great deal of interest, though Redfern seemed

to answer only by a few words in a very quiet tone.

“You think so?” said Mr. Hilborough in a pleased way; “and what is your authority? Ah, well, we will resume the subject another time.”

He had seen Violet coming, and turned with his usual courtesy to include her in the conversation. After dinner, Letty went into the garden, and Alfred soon followed her. Redfern stayed in the dining-room, talking to Mr. Hilborough. Through the window he could see the two walking up and down the gravel walks. Letty had her hand as usual in Alfred’s arm; he seemed always more like a brother to her than a cousin, and they were talking together with the unaffected interest of very familiar friends. They seemed perfectly satisfied with each other, and all that surrounded them, as if their life had always been easy and comprehensible,

unlike Redfern's own. Mr. Hilborough noticed that his nephew's attention was flagging, and followed the look of his eyes through the window.

"Ah, I dare say you would like to go out too. I won't detain you; you will find better friends out there; they will do you more good than I shall, with my talk."

Redfern protested a little.

"No, you had better go," said Mr. Hilborough. "I don't go out in the evening now, but I can see you all from this window. Go to the others, my boy," he added kindly, putting a hand on his nephew's shoulder; "you work hard at home, I know; a little nonsense does more good sometimes than a great deal of wisdom; go out and ask Violet for some."

Redfern had not expected so much sympathy; he had not remembered his uncle as so kind and considerate, and did not know how much alteration Letty's affectionate

tyranny had made in old habits of coldness and reserve.

He went out, but he did not join the others; he had no wish to intrude, so he went straight down the garden to the brook, and paced up and down the walk beside it, where it was dark in the evening in the shadow of the trees.

Melancholy thoughts came to him there as he walked alone, and the sound of low laughter and voices came through the dark leaves. His old self and his new life seemed mingled oddly together, but a buoyant feeling of youth was with him too; a vague sense of pleasant things realized, and of delightful things possible, rose in his mind, contrasting strangely with the habitual feeling of enmity with the rest of the world.

When he came out of the shadow on to the lawn, Violet and Alfred were sitting together on a garden seat there. As he



came near, Letty looked up with a smile, and moved a little, to make room for him too. He hesitated a moment, he wondered that she was so ready to welcome him ; but he took the place silently.

She went on talking to Alfred, and yet Redfern did not seem to be left out ; neither of them ignored his presence, though they did not try to make him join the conversation. He listened' silently, for it was pleasant to be received quietly as a friend, and to have to undergo no forced attempts to make acquaintance.

“ What a delightful place this is,” he said, after a while. “ I never remembered it as being so nice.”

“ Come and see it in spring, and in winter too,” said Letty, “ and find out how nice it is always.”

“ How tired you would get of me !” he said.

. “I think not,” she answered, looking at him with her frank eyes. “I don’t generally get tired of people only because I see them often.”

## CHAPTER II.

### MAKING ACQUAINTANCE AGAIN.

THERE was one point in Violet's character upon which Redfern was inclined to speculate. She was so frank and simple in her manners that he wondered if she was at heart devoid of some of the dignity and reserve that all women ought to have ; and there was so little self-assertion in her behaviour to others, that he wondered if she could always receive the respect which she never seemed to claim.

The question was answered for him the day after his arrival. Gerald was expected in the afternoon, and his cousins speculated

on his probable character and appearance. Alfred only had seen him since the memorable visit they had all paid to Monkholme.

“He was not a nice little boy,” said Violet, “but he may have improved, of course.”

“I don’t think I was a nice little boy,” remarked Redfern.

“Not very,” said Letty, with her old candour ; “but disagreeable children do sometimes turn out quite nice when they grow up.”

“There is some chance for me, then,” said Redfern. He was in very good spirits ; he had been busy all the morning with Mr. Hilborough, and all the afternoon gardening for Letty.

“A kind of chance if you try very hard, and do just precisely whatever I tell you,” replied Violet gravely.

“Oh ! so I will. To no end. To begin

with, how much must I clip off this rose-tree ?”

“Was that slang you used just now, or only something very learned? Greek, for instance?” inquired Letty.

“Something very learned. Quite beyond those books of yours. Hebrew, in fact.”

“You have not seen the books yet, and don’t know.”

“Can’t I tell? You would not wear such a pretty dress if you read Hebrew.”

“Thank you!” said Letty, making him a low curtsy.

“Now what is that? Something very learned, or the sort of thing they call dancing?”

“Don’t you know? Have you never seen any one dance?”

“I thank my poverty fervently that I have never witnessed such pagan mysteries.”

“It is very nice when you know how to do it. You must learn.”

“I could not do it if I knew how. You forget that I ended my dancing when I was here last,” and he looked down at his foot.

“Oh, I forgot!” said Letty, flushing suddenly crimson with mingled sympathy and vexation at her own carelessness.

“Don’t pretend you had not noticed how lame I am,” said Redfern impatiently.

“I did at first,” said Letty, looking full at him, as she always did when she said anything that might seem inconsiderate, so that the kindness in her eyes spoke more clearly than her words, “but it is very little indeed, and I forgot it directly.” She looked away from him, and said softly, “I am very sorry.”

“You don’t think I care? About the dancing, I mean?”

“No ; I suppose not. It does not matter.”

“If my performances, when I was a boy, had left my mind as free as my feet, I should not regret them very much.”

“I should think,” said Letty, softly still, and after a little pause, “that it is even freer.”

“You know nothing at all about it,” answered Redfern very shortly, even crossly.

“You need not clip my roses quite away because I say the wrong things and vex you,” Letty remonstrated, a smile in her eyes ; “it is not their fault if I am stupid.”

“That’s true,” said Redfern, smiling too ; “nor yours either.”

“Really ! I am sorry ; for then I can’t improve. I suppose you mean I was made so.”

“Precisely. You know I meant it.”

It was to this conversation—with Alfred

a little left out this time—that Gerald entered.

They saw him coming, and went down the walk to meet him. He had just the same faded-looking hair and light blue eyes as in his childhood, but his hair was curled carefully, and he had all the appearance of a dandy. Gloves, hat, boots, cane, all were perfection. Behind him walked a staring village boy with ruddy cheeks, carrying a very fine umbrella and an elegant portmanteau. Gerald had no longer a sneaking look of subservience, as in the old time, but he walked with an unmistakably self-complacent and slightly contemptuous air.

“How do you do?” said Violet very gravely; and the look in her eyes was so steady and courteous that Redfern wondered what was making him think that she measured Gerald’s moral height as precisely



as he was doing himself. “You have had a fine day for your journey.”

“Ah, yes—thanks! You are, I suppose, my cousin Letty? Longed to see you again for ever so many years. How do you do? Cousins, you know, of course.”

She had put out her hand to him, and his last vague observation had been meant to explain his own proceedings, for he had bent forward a little, as if he expected to be permitted a more brotherly greeting. Everybody in the little group understood the action, in the quick, mysterious way in which such things are guessed, almost before they are done. Alfred's face grew hot, and his eyebrows threateningly low. Redfern stared at the grass, and wondered what would happen, for Letty's powers of self-protection remained to be proved. There was only a second's doubt; Letty did not move back an inch, or show the least sign of embarrass-

ment ; she simply gazed at Gerald in a blank kind of distant way, so that it was he who stepped back, growing pink all over his pale face, and murmuring :

“ Beg pardon ; thought it was permissible—cousins—quite supposed that sort of thing was allowed.”

“ We will go into the house ; it is nearly dinner-time,” said Letty, in a calm voice.

She turned round and walked on with Alfred, leaving the two others to follow together. Gerald felt annoyed and uncomfortable ; Redfern was secretly laughing, but he put on a grave face and ignored his cousin's discomfiture.

“ Letty's particular, it seems,” observed Gerald awkwardly ; “ don't know why she should be, I'm sure ; we're second cousins ; indeed, she's a kind of niece.”

“ You consider yourself her uncle, then,”

suggested Redfern ; “quite the elderly relative style of thing.”

“No, not exactly that. Still, with relatives, it’s absurd to be prudish ; it is always made an excuse for, you know, affection, and well—familiarity—that sort of thing. I don’t see why she should object ; all girls don’t ; I know many who wouldn’t.”

“I don’t know very much of any girls,” Redfern replied, “so I can’t tell.”

Letty’s manner for the rest of the day was a puzzle to Redfern. Alfred was used to it and to her, accustomed to feel that she did everything correctly, and so he hardly noticed it ; but her way of proceeding was quite a new one to Redfern. She seemed to be really kinder to Gerald than to any one else ; her politeness, and consideration, and attention to his comfort were very great. He could not tell how it was that it all seemed to make Gerald more embarrassed

and chilled than before, when even Mr. Hilborough's dignity could not repress him. During dinner he talked about old-fashioned ways and country places, about the new lights and the proper thing to do now, unawed by a slight tone of haughtiness and coolness that soon came into his uncle's conversation. But Letty's kindness seemed to overwhelm him, and Redfern soon perceived that he was becoming positively afraid of her. He stammered when she spoke to him, upset things when she passed anything to him, and was almost too much embarrassed to be able to refuse the offers of comforts that she made to him in her character of hostess, but was far too much overcome to accept them.

This armour of courtesy was a new phenomenon to Redfern ; he admired it, and tried to comprehend how it proved so invincible. Gerald felt it, and wondered what it was, and

where it existed. It had nothing definite about it that could be attacked.

Gerald strolled about the garden with Alfred after dinner and suggested improvements ; he also kindly gave his cousin a few valuable hints about his dress. "That is not the style at all now, you know," he said ; "of course, my dear fellow, I quite understand how difficult it must be to keep up to all this sort of thing in the country."

He patronised and advised largely, Alfred being too good-natured and contented to care at all about it, or to make protests : so Gerald had somewhat recovered his feeling of self-importance when they joined Violet and Redfern at the garden-seat on the lawn.

"You must lead a dreadfully dull life, shut up here in the country, Letty," said he, making use at once of the familiar name that Redfern avoided yet ; for it seemed that his old acquaintance with the child hardly entitled

him to claim at once an intimate manner with the woman, kind and frank though she might be.

“I have not found it so yet,” replied Letty.

“It does well enough for old persons like uncle,” remarked Gerald, “but young people require something more stirring.”

“For instance, what?” inquired Redfern.

“The theatre, concerts——”

“I should like to hear good music,” said Letty, quite eagerly; and Redfern turned to look at her brightening eye, and to muse on the distance between her and the concerts he might go to, but neglected.

“Yes, and you see stylish people there; meet your friends, in fact. That’s the chief thing. Then there are dinners and dances. Here, I suppose, you get nothing but church and sermons.”

“Have they any place in your town dissipation?” Redfern asked.

“Not exactly. I have a pew, of course, at St. John’s; fashionable place that, very high, you know—incense and vestments; but one doesn’t need to go often; that belief in sermons and such things has exploded long ago.”

“You get on faster in the town than we do in the country,” said Alfred.

“If I remember rightly,” observed Redfern, “you had a very strong belief in those sermons and things in the old times.”

“Yes,” replied Gerald, laughing his unmirthful “Haw—haw!”—“it often amuses me to think of it. I quite took it all in in those days, but the time has got past those ideas; infernal tortures and evil spirits and so on.”

“I don’t remember that that was the whole of what we were taught to believe in, or even the best part of it,” Redfern remarked, in his quiet tone.

“There was a lot more, of course ; but all enlightened men have long since seen the folly of the old beliefs.”

“You advance more rapidly than I do. I have only just begun to see the beauty of them,” said Redfern. “I am still far behind you, you see ; quite where you were at the age of eight. I wonder when I shall reach your present intellectual height.”

“Speak more plainly,” said Letty quickly, “he does not understand you.”

“What must I say ?”

“Tell him that it is nothing for a man to be proud of, but rather to be despised for, that he has learnt to disbelieve and laugh at the teaching that has made the best people in the world, and helped even the bad to be better ; tell him that contempt for what you cannot understand is no proof of intellectual height, but rather the contrary ; and that those who reach the highest and see the



farthest are the last to speak slightly of the landmarks left behind them."

"You tell him best yourself," said Redfern.

"Really, I am sure, Letty, I beg your pardon," replied Gerald complacently, for Violet's earnestness by no means repressed him like her politeness; "I have said the wrong thing, of course. We ought not to talk in such a way before ladies; it is right for them to keep to the old ideas, and we ought not to disturb them; they have no need to be troubled about the new discoveries. Really, I beg your pardon. It was quite rude of me."

Letty looked at Redfern appealingly; she had very soon learnt to turn for help to him instead of to Alfred: he smiled a little and spoke.

"If you mean that women are always the last to forsake what is good and true, I think you are quite right. They are often the first

to see what is noble, while we speculate about it, and they cling to whatever is a little higher than the meanness of common life, so that, as you say, we have reason to be afraid of speaking slightly in their presence of things that are good and true, or of seeming to laugh at what is greater than ourselves."

He waited a little, to see if Gerald had any reply, and then got up and walked away.

"I had no idea Redfern had turned out that sort of a fellow," Gerald merely remarked, after he had gone.

Letty looked up, but Alfred spoke.

"He is really a good fellow; you've no idea how well he behaves to his people at home; and when I was cramming last year, he gave me lots of capital hints. You would not guess how much he does in a quiet way without talking about it."

Letty was satisfied, and walked away too.

She found Redfern lingering by the porch, and she joined him in his walk there.

There was a bright look in her eyes which showed that she had something to say to him, but she hesitated about saying it.

“Well, have they settled it all?” asked Redfern.

“No;” and then she went on, in a lower voice, “I was so glad to hear you speak as you did; it is good to know that you think in that way.”

“You don’t know what I think at all,” said Redfern indignantly; “I have not said I believed in anything yet.”

“I know that; but it makes no difference,” she answered, turning away with a smile.

Violet might persist in being satisfied with Redfern’s ideas, but she certainly found his manners a little peculiar. The very next day he astonished everybody by an unexpected expression of opinion.

When he went into the drawing-room in the evening he found Letty at the piano ; Alfred was there with a newspaper, but Gérald was turning over a heap of music and making observations upon it. Violet did not seem to notice him much ; she went on playing in her abstracted way, as if only to herself, and was disturbed rather than assisted by the occasional rushes Gerald made to the piano to turn over the leaves for her.

The aspect of things did not appear agreeable to Redfern as he entered, and he remarked curtly :

“ We are going to have a musical evening, I suppose, quite an elegant affair ; in which case I shall make an early disappearance.”

The two young men gazed at him, Gerald in disgust, Alfred merely thinking, “ Something’s wrong with Ref, I suppose,” but the

meaning of the words did not reach Letty at first through her music. She played on for a moment, then the discord of that sentiment striking her suddenly across all the chords, she stopped abruptly, took her hands from the piano and moved round.

She turned to Redfern with a hurt look in her eyes, and asked simply : “Don’t you like music ?”

Redfern was not looking at her, he had walked on to the table.

“I don’t know about liking it. It seems to me the most sensuous of all the arts ; it is the right sort of thing for people who live to feel pleasant sensations.”

“It is more than that, I think,” said Violet quietly, for when she was most hurt she said least.

“I don’t. It is an art that encourages laziness and pleasure-seeking. It ministers only to the satisfaction of the minute, and

appeals to nothing higher. We want something to incite us to work, and not to soothe us into self-satisfaction."

"I am sorry you think of music so," said Letty, turning round and shutting up the book.

"I dare say I am talking nonsense. Music is a pleasant thing, and I never have anything to do with pleasant things; we don't agree, that is all."

"Something has vexed you, Ref, or you would not talk so," said Alfred; "Letty's music is one of the best things at Monkholme."

Violet's eyes sought him across the room as if she thanked him. She had been awakened so suddenly out of a sweet dream of melody, that the slight on her music had wounded her even more than it would have done at another time, though her music had always been one of the best parts of her life,

and though she had begun to think so much of what Redfern said.

“ I hope you are not putting it away,” said Redfern, finding out at last the result of his polite observation. “ Don’t mind what I say.”

“ Thank you, I shall play no more to-night.”

When he came to know her better he understood that that quiet tone meant that she was either very angry or very much hurt ; to-night he did not notice it.

Alfred remarked it, however, and said : “ You need not care for what Redfern says, Letty ; he is a perfect bear, and understands nothing of music.”

“ Thank you,” said Redfern.

“ You know you are, that’s the redeeming point in you. Leave him to sulk, Letty, and play at chess with me.”

Letty agreed, but she played absently.

It took all the rest of the evening to bring her mind into harmony with her cousin again ; it hurt her so much to be angry with him, that it made her more angry to think of it.

“ It is only because I am conceited that I mind,” she said to herself repeatedly ; “ he cannot help disliking music, and he is right to speak the truth.”

She had quite forgiven him when they said “good-night,” however, and her eyes were able to meet his frankly, with no reserve of vexation to keep them troubled.



## CHAPTER III.

## OLD DAYS AND NEW.

THE next morning Alfred and Violet were going a walk together in search of something scientific, for Alfred was a great student of botany and geology—he was by profession a mining engineer—and Letty delighted in accompanying him on his exploring expedition.

“I dare say you think that mountain is as high as ever it was,” Alfred observed to Violet, pointing out a hill from the window.

“I will if you want me to,” said Letty obligingly. “Then you can prove me igno-

rant and enlighten me afterwards, all in proper order."

"I believe you did," retorted Alfred, putting away his scientific air to laugh at her.

"You shall instruct me just the same as if I had done," said Letty; "only don't you think Redfern might be improved too? I dare say he is almost as ignorant as I am of the geology and botany of this district. Shall I ask him to come with us and join me at being edified?"

"If you like," replied Alfred, who did not seem to know how to be jealous. "What about Gerald?"

"He announced that he was going to write letters to some German friends of his, and would be most particularly engaged; did you not hear him at breakfast? and did you not feel all your poor little knowledge of German flying out of your head at the ex-

pression of his intimate acquaintance with foreign languages ?”

“Not I. Shall I go for Redfern ?”

“No, I’ll go myself.”

Redfern was in the library—he happened to be alone there when Violet went—she knocked demurely before opening the door, and entered with a meek expression of countenance.

“I should think, as you are mistress here, that you might enter your own room without so much ceremony,” Redfern observed.

“I thought I might be disturbing deep studies,” replied Letty, with gravity.

“Don’t be a goose, and don’t tell stories,” advised Redfern.

“Don’t be rude, and don’t be ungrateful ; I have come politely to ask you to go with me and Alfred to a delightful place on the hills, where you won’t see anything remarkable in the ground, but Alfred will tell you

that you do, and you will have to believe him."

"I should like that very much. I am sorry I can't, but I have promised to do something for Gerald."

"For Gerald?"

"Yes, those letters of his overwhelm him; I believe he knows hardly anything of German, and I said I should be in the library this morning, and could give him a hint or two, so I should not like to go away."

"Very well, I am sorry, too."

Letty went with Alfred and had a pleasant morning. She talked with interest to her companion upon the subjects he liked most, but she found time to meditate on Redfern's conduct; she herself was kind to nearly every one, but then it was because she liked them, or was pleased to make them like her. Neither motive seemed to influence Redfern,

and she wondered why he cared to help Gerald.

“Do you know,” she said to him in the afternoon, “I thought you did not like Gerald?”

“I don’t,” said Redfern.

“Yet you stayed at home to help him.”

“If I only helped the persons I liked, I don’t think I should help anybody,” he replied.

“Oh, Redfern!”

“I’m not like you, an amiable person, easily pleased,” and he walked away, leaving Letty perplexed and a little disappointed.

That evening was a dull one. Redfern did not spend it with the others; he left the drawing-room a few minutes after entering it, and went out. Gerald suggested that Violet had driven him away by her music, as she had begun to play again. Letty

believed that perhaps she had, and was sorry. She had no enjoyment in playing any more ; all day there had seemed to be something wrong with her music : the tune seemed to have gone out of her piano ; she followed the melody vainly through her pieces, and could not reach the beauty of it. Redfern's words had spoilt it all for a little while ; she could not be content with the thing for itself, as she had always been before, but asked herself perpetually, " Why does it not please him ? " until at last it seemed to have no use while it did not.

She remained a little time at the piano to satisfy her grandfather, but she was glad to leave it as soon as she could. It had driven Redfern away, and she wanted to silence its tones ; they seemed to hold his place without filling it. It had happened that she had seen very little of him that day, and it was

astonishing to find how much she missed him.

The society of Alfred had always satisfied her before, now it seemed that he thought too highly of her to make a perfect companion ; after all, we want appreciation, or, if we cannot get that, comprehension, however critical, rather than admiration from those we choose for friends.

After Violet had put her music away, there seemed to be nothing to do. Perhaps she was dull because she was disappointed in some occupations she had hoped to have—one of the servants had been to the nearest market-town that day, and should have brought her a book she wanted to read, and some silk for work she wanted to finish ; he had neglected both, and left her without employment. She had expressed her disappointment at dinner, and Gerald had lamented greatly, and made generous but

vague suggestions of sacrificing himself to procure what she wanted.

“ Ah ! now, it’s odd,” he said, “ how helpless we are when we feel most zealous. How convenient it would be if, whenever a lady wanted anything, we only had to go in the garden and slay a dragon or two, like St. George or Perseus, and get the things out of its mouth. One might do something then to show zeal and politeness.”

“ Meanwhile we’ll wish for the dragons fervently,” said Redfern. “ Shall you be consoled, Violet, to know how eagerly we long for them ? It is the only way we have, you know, of being useful—unless indeed we went for the things instead.”

Alfred offered to go if Letty really wanted the book and the silk—he did not mind at all, he said ; he should like a walk ; but Letty would not hear of such a thing,



because it was much too far, and so she sat idle, and was unaccountably dreary all night.

It grew very late before Redfern came in again—he had never remained out so long before. While he was still absent the housemaid brought in a parcel for Miss Hilborough. Violet wondered at its arriving so late, and opened it at once, to find the book and the silk she had wanted inside.

“How can it have got here?” she asked in surprise.

“Perhaps Redfern has brought it,” suggested Alfred.

“But he is out yet.”

“No, I saw him come in a few minutes ago. I dare say he has been for it.”

“It is so far,” said Letty, “and he would have to walk both ways, and then——”

she stopped there, and did not finish her sentence.

“Then he is so very lame,” remarked Gerald, ending it for her. “Yes, he is. I never mention it to him, he must feel it so, of course ; but it is a great pity.”

“I don’t know why he should feel it,” replied Violet, with a flash of anger ; “it makes no difference to him, or to any one who knows him.”

“No, certainly not,” assented Gerald ; “people are really kinder to him on that account, of course. Still, I wonder he could manage to walk so far.”

Alfred laughed. “Why, Gerald, you know well enough that Ref could go twice as far as you ; it is all nonsense calling him lame, and he is not so lazy as you, and has twice as much will.”

“Do you think so ?” replied Gerald affectedly, for he was always a little more affected

when he felt provoked ; “ I don’t know that it’s considered the thing now for a fellow to walk as if he were a packman ; of course, when a man has no animal to ride on, and no money in his purse to hire one, nobody would think of blaming him for walking ; and it’s very creditable of Redfern to do it.”

Redfern himself came in just as Gerald finished speaking.

“ I am very glad to have your approbation in anything,” he observed ; “ though I don’t know what you are talking about.”

He crossed the room as usual, to the most out-of-the-way corner, and sat down there ; Letty waited a moment without speaking, and then followed him.

“ Redfern,” she said ; “ I suppose you got those things for me.”

“ I suppose so,” he answered.

“ It was so far to go ! Ah, you should not.”

“ I did it to please myself.”

“ It was very kind of you.”

“ It was nothing of the sort,” said Redfern, growing cross and curt. “ I don’t like being thanked. Use the things if you want them, but if you say any more about them, you’ll drive me out of the room.”

Letty went away with her work, and stitched industriously ; the thanks she might not utter seemed heavy in her mind ; she could only express them by working with great zeal, and she did that with a certain curious pleasure, hoping all the time that Redfern watched her.

It had been arranged for all the party at Monkholme to go on an expedition of pleasure the following day. Mr. Hilborough had some property that he wished to see in a place about twenty miles from Monkholme ; the neighbourhood he was going to was very picturesque, and the young people had agreed

to go with him, and see the lake and water-fall there, while he did his business. They would go by rail half-way, drive afterwards to the lake, dine at the hotel, and return in the evening. It was the sort of excursion that Gerald approved of, as it did not threaten to spoil his boots or gloves.

Violet had ordered an early lunch, that they might start in good time, and as they ate it, and talked over their plans for the day, Redfern astonished them all by announcing that he was not going.

Gerald exclaimed, Alfred protested, Mr. Hilborough persuaded. Violet alone was silent, and merely looked her disappointment; but Redfern, having announced his resolution, seemed to have no other idea than that of carrying it out.

“I wonder why he won’t go?” Violet asked, when he had left the room.

“I have no doubt he is knocked up with

last night's walk, though he won't confess it," said Gerald.

"Not he," replied Alfred. "I dare say it is the money. He could not go without spending something, and he has not got it to spend. The people at home all take it from him."

Redfern had retired to his own room to write some letters, and did not come down to see them depart. He remained there all the afternoon.

He had said to Letty : "Don't have dinner for me ; I would rather not. This lunch will do quite well. I am accustomed to early dinners at home ; just let me have a cup of tea and nothing else."

Violet had agreed, knowing that he disliked to give trouble, and to have persons waiting upon him.

Accordingly, at five o'clock the housemaid knocked at his door and said that tea was

ready in the library. He put away his letters, they were rather dreary ones, necessarily speaking about troubles and annoyances at home, which were always referred to him, and he went down to tea.

The house was very quiet, it was always so by contrast to his home ; there seemed so much room in it, always a place left for silence if he wanted to find it ; through all the windows green trees were seen, either near or far off, and the air that came through them was fresh and quiet, only brightened and made clearer, it seemed, by the thrilling songs of the birds that came in with it. He could not help thinking, as he walked downstairs and saw the fresh flowers in the hall, what a well-ordered house it was ; he enjoyed the solitude of it, but he thought of Violet, and the way she arranged it all, and felt a kind of regret that such a woman could not

remain always young, cheerful and unsaddened, wondering, as he did so, if care and changes could make her the same sort of helpless, repining and unmanaging woman as his own mother.

“She will never be poor,” he thought, “and that makes a great difference in any one’s life.”

He opened the library door, and saw at a glance the table with the tea ready there, the window open, with the sunlight shining through it, and Violet coming in with the sunlight. She had a late rose in her dress, and another in her hand ; she came up to him smiling, and said : “See, it is the best in all the garden ; will you have it ?”

He took it from her, and turned away, putting it down hastily on the table as he did so. He felt his old dislike to kind treatment, or else he liked it more than he cared to show.



“Why have you not gone with the others?” he asked, in a tone of annoyance.

“I stayed to make tea for you,” she answered.

“I wish you had not,” he said.

“I like to do it,” she said; “so why should I not? I will go away immediately after, and hide out of sight and hearing.”

“You know, Violet, I did not mean that,” he said, sounding more vexed still.

“Sit down, and don’t be cross,” she answered, smiling persistently; “I shall please myself what I do. I am mistress here.”

He sat down, and took the tea from her hands, watching her silently. It vexed him to see any one so pretty and elegant waiting upon him; yet he liked it, in spite of himself. He was not accustomed to be much noticed or looked after in his own home, and thought

himself of no consequence—a person who ought to take anything that happened, to give the least trouble to others; it was strange to him to sit in that pleasant room, with the nice arrangements about him, and Violet there only to see that he was served well.

“You are an amiable mistress,” he observed, in answer to her last remark.

“But I am obstinate,” she said, “and while I am your hostess you shall not go about thinking that you are of no consequence to anyone, and that no one is caring about you, as you like to do.”

“How do you know I do it?”

“I can see. Confess now, that you think this nicer than drinking your tea in solitude, and feeling independent?”

“If I do, you will laugh at me.”

“Should you mind that?” she asked.

“I am sure I let you laugh at *me*.

That is nothing, when people like each other."

"When people like each other!" he repeated. "That is just the difference, your life and mine started from opposite points with regard to that liking. You can well afford to let people laugh at you."

"And so can you, if you only knew it."

Redfern shook his head, and smiled a little. They got up to go into the garden as usual. It was a lovely evening; the sun was setting, and casting its cold bright autumnal rays over the lawn; white lines of clouds drifted away from the west, leaving pale blue channels in the sky, that looked like a vision of calm lakes and rivers. There was stillness all about, except for the sudden showers of brown leaves that fell upon them as they walked, and the clear song of the birds, that had lost the wild sweet notes of spring, and taken cheerier ones instead.

“What a sweet place this is,” said Redfern, after they had been out a little time, and Violet’s silence had given him courage to speak as he liked ; “if I could live in a spot like this, and paint pictures—look at that sky ! what a difference it would make !”

“Should you like still to paint ?”

“I should think so ; if I could get away from men to things like these—this garden and those hills—life would seem another thing. I wonder if I ever shall go back to an artist’s life.”

“Are you not satisfied with the work you have now ?”

“I hate it, and I hate the people I am with, and the things they care for ; and I hate the place I live in.”

“Oh, Redfern ! Do you really ? Every one thought you liked your work.”

“I was not likely to tell every one what I liked.”

They were sitting now on the garden seat, and the sun had set; the sky was deepening into a darker blue over head, and the birds were growing quieter, only uttering now and then a faint twitter in the trees.

“It is very hard for you,” said Letty, after a pause, “and some persons have so much more than they want. I have.”

“I should not like to have it,” said Redfern quickly; “I hate accumulated properties that don’t seem to belong to you properly; the earning of other men’s eyes and hands and brains. I would rather rely on my own, and have only what they get for me; I should know how to use it; the other, I think, would be only in my way.”

“Do you think, then, that people ought not to have riches that others have given or left to them?”

“I know nothing about other people. I

don't profess to understand their duties and their rights. I know that existing arrangements could not all be upset for vague ideas, and if they could, I don't know that they ought to be. I can speak only for myself. While there exists such dreadful enigmas of great riches and great poverty living side by side, with no way of modifying each other, while so many persons suffer want and others have too much, I would rather, for my own part, take no more from the world than I am able to give it back in hard work, and if I can't get enough that way, it is the simplest thing to go without the rest."

"If money came to you by inheritance, would you not take it?"

"I would rather not. What should I do with it? The easiest plan seems to be, just to give what work you have in you to the world, and make as fair an exchange with it as you can, for other things in return."

“What must you think of me?” said Letty. “I am absolutely of no use at all in the world. If I had taken only what I had earned, I should never have had even bread and butter to eat.”

“I don’t think about you,” replied Redfern; “you are a different sort of person; it seems right for you to do nothing much.”

“Thank you,” said Violet, feeling rather hurt, “but I would rather not be that sort of a person.”

“Oh, you don’t understand me,” said Redfern impatiently. “It seems good for you to live; you have a kind of right to have pleasant things, since the world is on the whole rather better and nicer because you are in it. With me it is different.”

“What an odd idea you have of yourself,” said Letty softly, as if she contrasted it with one in her own mind. In the silence that followed, her thoughts went wandering back

to the time when she had known Redfern before, to the adventure in the lane and on the hill.

“ You should go and see the cave where you tried to be Robinson Crusoe,” she said suddenly.

“ Do you remember those things ?” he asked at once.

“ Yes ; you were very naughty then.”

“ I thought perhaps you had forgotten. How you must dislike me when you think of them !”

He seemed so disgusted at himself, or at her good memory, that she hastened to answer him.

“ Why should I ?” she said ; “ you never did me any harm. At least——” her eyes met his as she remembered the adventure of the pond ; she stopped, and her face flushed crimson.

He looked at her for a minute with a sadder



look than she had seen in his face before—it was quite gentle in its sadness; and he turned away and was silent.

“ Oh, Redfern, as if it made any difference now !” And not knowing how to speak what she felt in any words, she put out her hand to him.

He took it with an odd sensation. He had never held a woman’s hand caressingly before—to touch it wounded him ; like the music he avoided, it only made him feel more lost and uncongenial ; yet he held it still. It seemed to take him for the first time in his life into the world of pleasant things, as if he belonged to them, and could be one himself. Violet was so sweet a woman, that she had a right to choose only companions who were congenial to her own nature ; and yet she chose him, and could be hurt because he was, and console him as women console only those who are very dear to them.

He kept her hand and was silent. She did not speak either. She did not forget that he had it, but bent her head down in the twilight to hide her eyes and her cheeks, for she was shy, and half-ashamed of her own daring; yet she did not want to take it away, and so vex him again—it was only pleasant to feel that he was comforted.

“Why are you so good to me, Violet?” he said at last, in a tone she had never heard before.

“Am I good to you?” she asked, with a flutter in her voice.

“Yes, don’t you know you are? Don’t you mean to be?”

She did not think it necessary to answer him, and he did not ask her again.

“Violet,” he said, after a little while, “don’t you think me odd, and bad-tempered, and disagreeable?”

“Indeed, no,” she answered softly.

He fell into a deep meditation thereupon, and thought of all sorts of possibilities in the future that he had never dreamed of before. He felt a different person that night: Violet had taken him with her into her own pleasant land of love, trust, and contentment, and given him the right to dream of happiness from which he had always fancied himself shut out before.

At length she drew away her hand gently, and said it was getting late, and they must go in. He turned his eyes to her for the first time since the silence had begun.

“Why should we? It is pleasant here. If you are cold I will get you a shawl.”

She said she was not cold, and lingered there a little longer. She had always had a decided will of her own before, now she felt a new desire to do just whatever he wanted, and nothing else; so she sat there still,

though she did not speak. It was he who said very soon that he was selfish to keep her in the cold ; and then he got up to go in. She did not go into the drawing-room with him at once, having some orders to give about supper ; when she entered it, she found that he had opened the piano and put the music-stool ready for her.

“ Will you play for me ? ” he asked.

“ I thought you did not like music, ” she answered.

“ I shall to-night, if you will give me some. ”

So she sat down and played, while he retreated to his distant corner and listened there. After some time she turned round to him and said, “ Will you tell me if you like it really ? ”

“ To-night I do. ”

“ Why did you not before ? ”

“ I can't tell you very well. It put me

out of tune with my own life, and made me angry with myself in some curious way. It spoke to me out of a world that I never could get into. Good people and happy people ought to have music; it does not suit me."

"Are you neither good nor happy?"

"To-night," he said, with a little laugh, "I feel both. I don't know why. I don't know anything good that I have been doing, do you?"

She turned again to her piano.

"Shall I go on?" she asked.

"If you will. I like your music now. It is not something made for some one else that I am coming in for, without any right to it. It is my own; you are actually playing for me. I like that."

Letty went on playing till there was a sound of voices in the hall; then she got up from the piano.

“Music !” said Alfred, in surprise, “and Redfern here too ! this is astonishing !”

Redfern got up, however, and left the drawing-room as the others entered it.

## CHAPTER IV.

## REDFERN IS DISAGREEABLE.

VIOLET rose early the next morning; life seemed just then too good a thing to be wasted in unconscious slumber. There was music in her heart, as there is in the lark when he rises so soon to greet the morning sun; but she did not so well know what to do with it. She went out to the white dews and pale mists of the autumn morning, and down to the brook into which the wet trees showered their shining drops as she shook them. Alfred was an early riser, and was the first to come out to her in the garden; when Redfern looked through his window he

saw them there together: Violet was buttoning a very big pair of gardening gloves that Alfred had on, and they were both smiling and looking pleased with each other, as usual.

Redfern turned away and went down to breakfast very unsmilingly. That note of gladness in Violet's mind had no echo in his now; all things looked to him different in the cold morning sunlight, which struck so feebly through the lingering haze; he felt cheated and disappointed, and angry with himself for having made that possible, like a man who has awakened from a pleasant dream, and is disgusted to find that he had mistaken it at first for a reality.

“What a fool I have been,” he thought; “she is kind to everybody, and is quite willing to pity me.”

Being still in his first hopeful youth, he was impatient of pity, and would take only



sympathy ; the feeling of liking and comradeship was delightful, mere kindness vexed him.

When Violet and Alfred came in, they found him sitting at the table with a moody and unresponsive face.

They were both in good spirits, and were talking with much interest.

“ You know, Alfred, if you did turn the little stream through my fern-bed, you would have to make it cross the path,” said Violet.

“ We could take it through pipes.”

“ No, it never shall go through pipes, that nice, fresh, free water. Let it have the sunlight on its way all through the garden ; they may spoil it when they get it at the town ; we won't shut it up here.”

“ Are you so considerate for the water because you think it would dislike the change, or only for the sake of feeling

yourself generous ?” asked Redfern, rather drily.

“ I don’t know. I don’t like the idea of shutting ‘up my mountain stream in a narrow darkness ; that is all,” answered Violet.

“ When it gets to town, won’t it be doing more good than when it is sparkling over your lawn ? Do you despise the working part of life ?”

“ No ; I think it is a pity that work should so often be ugly ; and it is a pity that all our beautiful rivers should be spoilt so long before they reach the sea. I am foolish, I know, and don’t think about things properly ; but other people say so too—Kingsley does.”

“ That settles it, of course,” answered Redfern, drily still.

“ What did you do to him last night, Letty ?” asked Alfred. “ It is that music

again ; he is as cross as possible. My dear fellow, here is a moral for you. When there is something wrong with yourself, don't imagine that all the world is turned upside down. Its position is precisely the same as it was yesterday ; not one stratum has been——”

“ We won't have any geology,” said Violet, “ and we will have breakfast.”

They sat down, and the discussion was given up. Redfern, however, persisted in talking to Mr. Hilborough, quite as if he had no interests in common with the others. Violet and Alfred were left to converse with each other, and they did it as cheerfully as ever. Gerald, as usual, came down late ; his hair always took him a long time to brush.

He made his ordinary apologies :

“ So sorry ; very shocking of me ; don't let me keep you at the table, Letty.”

The way he simply said "Letty" was extremely provoking to Redfern, though it did not seem to annoy Alfred.

"We had a charming excursion yesterday," said Gerald; "quite a pity you did not go."

"I have so often been before," said Violet, "that I did not care about it. Of course, you would like to see it, and Alfred is always ready to take people on such expeditions; it is different for me."

"You would have enjoyed it, I'm sure. We got splendid horses at the other end. I drove them round the lake; spirited animals, but I knew how to manage them."

"Violet missed a treat certainly in not seeing you," observed Redfern.

"Oh, he would not have done it if she had been there," said Alfred. "I should not have let him risk it."

"Really, Alfred, I can't see what risk

there would have been. I am accustomed to driving."

"Not in such a district, on such roads," said Mr. Hilborough; "and however well it may be for young men to risk their own limbs in such performances, they would never, I should hope, think of exposing a lady to the danger."

Mr. Hilborough's manner was always a little stiff and stern in speaking to Gerald.

"Oh, no! of course not," answered Gerald, rather nervously; "most careful—valuable trust. I hope Letty might safely confide herself to me."

"I don't think I need to do," said Violet; "I am very well taken care of generally."

"Yes; I'm sure," responded Gerald, with a slight drawl, "Alfred quite takes the place of an elder brother. Well, as I was saying, we had a capital day, a first-rate dinner at

the hotel. It was certainly a mistake that you did not go."

"Yes," said Redfern, "I am sorry she stayed away for me."

Violet looked at him with an altered countenance. There seemed a great deal of ingratitude and misapprehension in such a speech. She did not answer it, and was grave and silent afterwards.

"What a curious temper Redfern has," Gerald remarked, when breakfast was over and Redfern had disappeared.

"If he has," said Violet suddenly, "he seems to be careful that it should hurt nobody but himself."

"Do you think so?" Gerald inquired. "I thought that you were vexed at him over breakfast."

Violet turned away with a flushed face; for she was incapable of attempting a deceit, and knew that he spoke the truth.

“ Will you go out with me, Letty ?” asked Alfred. “ I am going across the valley.”

She was glad to go with him, to find somebody who needed her, and was not unselfishly—with such unkind consideration—wishing for better enjoyments for her. To be very much wanted by any one is a higher compliment, in a woman’s mind, than to be very much considered. She was angry with herself for feeling desponding ; there was no cause for it, she thought. Certainly she and Redfern were good friends. He had been so amiable the night before, and nothing had happened since to make them disagree ; she could not understand why she felt so dreary and disappointed. Then she thought that perhaps something had occurred in his own life to trouble him.

“ He never speaks to complain of things,” she said to herself ; “ and as I never have any anxieties, I don’t consider what other

people may have. I must be more considerate, and not mind when he seems disturbed."

When she returned, therefore, she was angry no more, only a little sorry instead. He was sitting in the library writing when she entered. She went to him very quietly, as if afraid of disturbing him, and said :

"If you are busy again to-day, and want to get your letters done for the post, I will send you some tea in, as you had it yesterday. I know you don't like the fuss of a late dinner and the waste of time."

He leaned back in his chair, and looked at her.

"You are very good," he said ; "but I would rather come to dinner. I shall have finished soon. Why do you persist in being kind to me when I am such a bear?"

"Are you a bear?" she asked, a smile



coming back to her eyes ; and she went out of the room feeling content once more.

Redfern's bad temper had by no means exhausted itself, however. He was moody all the evening, and sat with a book in his hand while the others talked.

" Violet," he said suddenly, after he had been indulging in a long and somewhat bitter meditation, " I shan't stay till Monday, after all."

" Oh, Redfern ! why not ?"

" I have decided to go with Gerald on Saturday."

" I thought you said you could manage to stay."

" So I fancied. It will be best to go, however."

Violet was silent.

" Is it your business ?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

“Not exactly ; the fact is, this sort of thing does not suit me. I will go back to my work. It is the only thing I am good for.”

“Wait till to-morrow ; you will think differently then,” suggested Alfred.

“Why should you go ?” asked Violet earnestly ; “don’t you really like being here ?”

“How can I like showing myself such a cross, uncivilized animal.”

“Never mind. If we are satisfied, you may be.”

“Thank you. You are generous, but I decline to be satisfied.”

There was a long pause. Gerald had gone out of the room ; Alfred and Violet were playing chess together : they went on silently, but Violet played abstractedly, giving no thought to the game.

“I believe, Redfern,” she said, after some

time, speaking very gravely and gently, "you think too much about yourself."

"Probably," answered Redfern curtly, "I am obliged to you for reminding me of it."

"I don't mean selfishly," said Letty, looking anxiously at him, trying to meet his eyes, that he might see all the sympathy in hers; "but you think about your faults, and it is a mistake to do that too much, though it may be only to blame yourself."

"No doubt," Redfern assented coldly, not looking at her, "I only make them more evident."

"You give them more importance than they really have, and make them come between you and your friends more than they need to do. Don't you think so?"

She got up and turned towards him. She wanted to reach his thoughts and make him feel her sympathy, but she did not know how.

He persistently avoided meeting her eyes, and he answered :

“ You may be quite right ; there is a simple way of avoiding such misunderstandings in the future.”

He rose and closed his book ; Letty looked at him with a troubled face. Alfred put his hand on his arm and spoke impatiently.

“ Don’t be absurd, Ref ; and don’t imagine because you are a little cross yourself that your friends want to quarrel with you.”

“ I don’t imagine so,” answered Redfern, less coldly than he had spoken to Violet ; “ I know they don’t. Violet would be kind to a dog or a cat, much more to me. The fact is, I don’t belong to you all ; we are not of the same sort, and can’t agree. I have no business among you, and I’ll go.”

He put down his book and walked out of the room. Violet stooped silently to pick up some chessmen that had rolled over ; Alfred

knelt on the hearthrug to help her ; he caught her hand as he did so, and looked into her face ; there were tears shining in her eyes, though she twinkled them away and tried to laugh.

“Don’t mind him, Letty,” said Alfred, “he will change his ideas to-morrow. Something must have vexed him, though I can’t think how he can be so provoking and unreasonable to you, who are always kind. I have seen him keep his temper splendidly, when he has been most provoked. I don’t know what’s the matter with him just now.”

“Thank you,” answered Violet, turning away her face, “I’ll try not to mind.”

Alfred put his hand on her shoulder, and attempted to make her look round.

“What a goose you are to care !” he said, smiling.

“You see, Alfred, nobody seems to care

very much," answered Violet apologetically, "perhaps that is why I do."

The next day was Friday. Redfern asked for a railway guide, and talked over the trains with Gerald.

"You are not thinking of going?" said Mr. Hilborough.

"Yes; to-morrow, with Gerald."

"Change your mind if you can. We should like to have you here a little longer."

"Thank you. I would rather go."

Mr. Hilborough said no more then, but he spoke on the subject afterwards.

"I think Redfern could manage to stay if he chose," he said; "persuade him to do so if you can. I like to have him here; I don't know when I have seen a young man who pleased me more. Who would have expected him to turn out like this? You are not tired of him, are you, Letty?"

"Oh no!"

“ Then get him to stay, my dear.”

Mr. Hilborough shared the common delusion at Monkholme, that Violet had only to ask for a thing to have it done. She helped unconsciously to keep it up herself, by rarely asking for things that she knew would be granted with inconvenience or reluctance.

She had, as usual, quite persuaded herself by this time that it was she who had been in the wrong. It was much the pleasantest conviction to come to, because it only required that she should be sorry and behave better, and then all evils would be remedied.

To have to blame some one else was much worse ; it put her in a hopeless, helpless case. No repentance on her side could put that right ; she could only wait and depend on others. To be angry with Redfern seemed most miserable of all—so miser-

able, that she could not feel so for long ; she remembered she had made observations he might well feel unkind, and so she supposed she had displeased him.

“ I am used to speaking so to Alfred,” she thought, “ but we know each other so well, that it is easy to understand all we say. It is different with Redfern ; he is almost like a stranger, and so few people seem to care about him, and I, who wanted to help and please him have only vexed and hurt him.”

She was very contrite, and listened to the conversation about the trains silently ; but she was only waiting a better opportunity to speak.

Before lunch the young people had assembled in the garden : Gerald was smoking a cigar ; Alfred, as usual, was talking to Violet. Redfern had left them, and strolled down to the brook, where he was walking alone.



Violet watched him go, and followed him with her eyes. She did not like to think of him choosing solitude in the shadow there, while they laughed together in the sunshine on the lawn.

She turned away as soon as Gerald began to speak to Alfred, and went down to the brook too.

Redfern was walking there, on the narrow path between the trees and the stream; the brook went rushing on with a gurgling, bubbling noise that he liked to hear, and the sunlight caught the creases of smooth water over the stones, and made them bright as glass.

He looked dreary, or rather, he had a kind of worried but patient look that touched Violet very much, for he seldom let it be seen, and always put down the gloom caused by his anxieties to bad temper.

Violet went up to him, simply, as she

always did, with all the affection and sadness she felt just then visible in her face.

He looked rather vexed to see her, and did not turn towards her or attempt to speak. She went to him where he stood silent, and looked for a moment at the water with him : then she spoke.

“Redfern,” she said gently, putting her hand in his arm as she had been used to do to Alfred, “why do you mind what I say ? Why do you care when you know that I like you ?”

He cast only a side glance at her earnest face, with its gentle, fearless eyes ; perhaps he thought she was a little forward, not knowing how much moral courage the absence of all small personal motives may safely give even to a woman ; perhaps he thought she was only going to make him look foolish, by offering kindness that signi-

fied only indifference, and indulgence that breathed a little of contempt. He turned from her abruptly, with no answering gesture of friendliness.

“I don’t see much honour or pleasure in that,” he said coldly; “it seems to me that you like everybody.”

Violet took her hand from his arm and looked at him for a minute with a face that slowly flushed and eyes that kindled gradually. His attitude and tone rejected her offer of friendship as much as his words; she drew her head back a little, with an unconscious gesture of wounded dignity, and moved away slowly, with a very erect and quiet manner.

She was cruelly wounded where she had least expected it, and she had offered herself for the slight; she had put away all pride, and ignored all the deference due to her womanhood, feeling safe in her very abnega-

tion of self, and the answer she had received to her repentance and humility was a repulse that could never have been given to her had she kept her own place coldly.

She went back across the lawn with a steady, distant look about her eyes, and a set expression round her mouth. Something new had happened in her life, a very unpleasant lesson had been taught to her; it seemed that her friendship was not a good thing in itself, it seemed that for some people she had no gift at all to offer that had any value.

“Is he sulky yet?” asked Alfred, who guessed what her errand had been; “won’t he come out of his solitude?”

“Redfern,” said Gerald, with an affected drawl, “has a very queer way of going on. It is not everybody who would expect to be made the more fuss of, the crosser he gets. I don’t know, I’m sure, how he feels safe to

do it ; but it seems to me that it does," he added confidentially to Alfred, as Violet went on to the house, "it does, you know, answer uncommonly well with some women."

## CHAPTER V.

## REDFERN IS PENITENT.

VIOLET had no choice or hope any more in her intercourse with Redfern. The easy plan of blaming herself and making atonement was ended. How could she atone for past faults by present kindness, when the kindness itself was disliked and rejected? Her wealth was suddenly proved valueless; she had paid her way through life and bought all she cared for by her affections; she had used them as gifts when she wanted to be generous, and reserved them carefully when she wanted to be prudent, they had never been rejected before as valueless coins, now it

seemed that they had no currency beyond a tiny circle, where the generosity of others allowed them to pass unchallenged. She told no one what she had done ; she had no woman to tell, and such a confidence was not of the sort to be made even to a brother. She only said that she thought Redfern still intended to go to-morrow.

Redfern came in only just in time for lunch ; he seemed inclined to be as quiet and silent as Violet, but he soon discovered that something was wrong at the table ; the conversation did not go on so pleasantly as usual, and he never, by any chance, met Violet's eyes.

She did not speak to him at all ; she found it impossible to do so with a reserve of wounded pride in her heart. He became conscious that she was very much offended with him, that it was he who had chilled what was always the sunshine of the circle,

and he roused himself, and tried to revive the conversation.

He did not venture to address Violet, except indirectly, and she never answered him ; he began to watch vainly for a look from her, though it might be a cold and unwilling one, and he quietly paid her as much attention as he could, getting all she required assiduously though silently. She said "Thank you," coldly, and as if she disliked the necessity of being grateful, and she never turned her eyes to him.

He was surprised to find her so persistently displeased ; knowing very little of the ways of women, he had no idea how much his rejection of her kindness could insult and offend her ; he only knew that he had been cross, and that after all Violet had an identity which it was possible to hurt and vex.

As usual, he began to behave better as soon as he was not treated quite so well ; he



tried desperately to put everything right again, and was most amiable even to Gerald. He was determinedly helpful and obliging all the afternoon ; Violet, if she would not look at him, was obliged to thank him more than once.

His considerate attentions hurt Violet, now that she had nothing he cared for to answer them with ; she wished he would be neglectful and impatient, and so leave her to be merely angry. But it seemed that nothing could annoy him that afternoon ; he thought of everybody's comfort except his own, and to do so just then appeared the cruellest of all. It seemed that he too could be kind, she thought, with some bitterness ; she had all her life been occupied in offering her kindness to others, as if it were a good thing to have, and sure to be helpful wherever she gave it ; yet how had she known that it would be of any use or good ? and not a

trouble and annoyance only? now Redfern was paying her back again, and she only wished he would go away and give her no more of what she could not bear to receive.

Redfern soon found that his politeness did not please her, and retired gradually into his quiet ways again, feeling puzzled and exceedingly disturbed.

For one moment they were left alone together by the fish-pond, while Alfred went into the house for bread for the swans.

“Violet,” asked Redfern suddenly, “do you never forgive any one who vexes you?”

“Yes, when they care to be forgiven.”

She gave him one glance in which many feelings were mingled, and walked away.

Afterwards she was standing alone by an old stone vase that was full of ferns, and dropping over with ivy-leaved toad-flax; it stood on a tall pedestal, and was green and

mouldy with age. She leaned against it and gazed before her rather drearily.

Some one came and stood just behind ; she knew that it was Redfern, but did not care to look round or to move away ; she was tired of being actively indignant, and wanted just to ignore him.

“ Violet,” he said, “ do you mean to be always angry with me ? ”

“ I don’t know,” she answered, gazing straight before her into the haze of the distant valley, where the white mists began to creep up the meadows and dim the outlines of the trees.

“ You see I was right,” said Redfern, “ I am not fit to be with civilized people.”

“ Because you don’t care to be.”

“ Unfortunately I am afraid I do care. Was I very rude, Violet ? I did not mean to be.”

She relented a little and turned half towards him.

“Did you not know you were?”

“I generally am, I know that, and I was in an abominable temper just then; but I was not aware that I was very much worse than usual.”

“Were you not?” said Violet in wonder; then she gazed again at the drowning trees and the valley flooded in mist. It was creeping up to the garden, but the hedges seemed to hold it back for a little.

“Don’t you intend to say anything?” asked Redfern, after a pause. “I am not much used to making apologies, which is a pity, perhaps. When I do a wrong thing, I generally stick to it, and pretend to think it is right; but I can’t do that to you. Still, I shall get tired of waiting humbly here, while nobody pays any attention to me, and you study the landscape. Don’t you really mean to forgive me? I’ll go and pack my port-manteau if you don’t.”

“Yes,” she said, turning to him at once, “if you want to be forgiven. If you care about my being vexed, there isn’t any need to be vexed any more. I thought you didn’t; that was the worst of it.”

“I believe I do. It has felt particularly unpleasant all this afternoon to know you would not speak to me. If you give me up, Violet, I must be in a dismal case; there can’t be any good in me at all.”

“But you need not give yourself up, if I do. You will always know that you like what is good, and you will do it. Don’t you think so?” she asked, looking at him with bright believing eyes.

“I have not any such comfortable assurance.”

“And if I blame you, you ought not to mind or to believe what I say. You see,” she continued, looking away from him, while her face flushed and she spoke more slowly,

“everybody has always been too kind to me, and praised me for nearly everything I did, and given me whatever I wanted, and so I dare say I have got to believe that whatever I think right is sure to be right, and that people ought to do whatever I wish. I dare say I am provoking and dictating. Grandpapa and Alfred don’t contradict me enough ; but don’t be quite disgusted with me if I am ; I don’t mean to be, or want to be. I don’t feel so, I think, if you really knew. I would be better if I knew how.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Violet,” replied Redfern, with a little uncomfortable laugh of vexation. “Don’t pretend you’ve been behaving badly instead of me ; that is a little too much.”

She turned to him with her simple, earnest eyes, that expressed no knowledge of pretence ; if she wished to deceive him, she deceived herself too ; but she said no more.

“I have no doubt,” said Redfern, a little drily, as if slightly ashamed of the sentiment he expressed, “I was vexed, after all, that you liked everybody equally ; I should prefer you to like me a little better than ‘everybody.’”

“I will then,” answered Letty, with a sudden smile, the perplexity and trouble vanishing from her eyes ; “a great deal better than most people, if you want me to do.”

“You had better not, you’ll be sorry after. I suppose, though,” he added, “that you have already cultivated such a vast liking for some people—for Alfred, for instance—that you have not much left to give to any one else.”

“Yes, I have,” said Letty, brightly still.

“Don’t give it to me then,” he said ; but he waited for her answer with a smile in his eyes.

She only answered : “I shall please my-

self," and then they turned to go back to the house together, but slowly. The mist came over the hedge and swept up the garden after them, over the brown dead leaves; Violet gazed at the leaves, and Redfern walked silently beside her.

"What about going home to-morrow?" she asked suddenly.

"I can't say," he answered, gravely.

"I shan't ask you to stay any longer, because if I did, you would be sure to go."

"Don't ask me, then," he said, "I will stay without."

Everybody except Gerald was pleased to hear that Redfern was remaining longer. Alfred was glad, as usual, in his good natured, indifferent way. Mr. Hilborough was simply satisfied; he thought that what Violet asked for was sure to be done, and he had therefore expected nothing else. The



young men were nevertheless surprised. At noon Redfern had seemed determined to go, and he was not greatly given to changing his mind. They begged for an explanation, but he gave no satisfactory one.

“ I stayed because Violet did not ask me,” he said, oddly. “ I don’t know any other reason.”

The next day Gerald went home. Violet, Alfred, and Redfern, having nothing else to do, went to the station to see him depart.

Gerald was disgusted at Redfern for staying longer at Monkholme, since he had not been invited to do so himself.

“ Stupid place,” he said, “ all very well for a day or two, but nothing satisfactory for a man to do here. It’s right for Alfred ; he is keeping in with the old gentleman, and encouraging Letty to think him an angel ; but for anybody else without such aims, it’s uncommonly stupid.”

“ I suppose,” he observed to Redfern, as they stood on the platform together, “ you think it worth while to put up with this a little longer.”

“ I suppose so,” replied Redfern.

“ I dare say you have a kind of chance ; the old fellow seems to take to you, and Alfred had better look out about Letty——”

“ Don’t you think,” asked Redfern, looking at him very steadily, “ that we had better leave Violet out of this conversation ?”

“ Ah, well,” replied Gerald nervously, looking to the right and to the left, anywhere but straight before him, where Redfern’s eyes were fixed upon him, “ as you like, of course, if you choose to be so particular.”

“ On the whole,” said Redfern, “ I think I do choose.”

“ I dare say you have a chance, and the

place is worth something; there's Monkholme, and a good deal besides. I should not go in for it myself; can't say I like that style of thing—a man has to suppress all his opinions and give up his independence. Look, for instance, what orthodox notions you feel obliged to adopt; I should not like to have to do it, though it may suit you."

"Of course," assented Redfern drily, "that style of thing may suit me."

"Just so; one fellow's different from another, you know how to knock under and keep your own ideas quiet. Well, I hope you may succeed."

"Thank you," said Redfern.

"I shan't interfere with you at all. Don't be afraid of that."

"I am not," said Redfern.

"Ah, well. No need to be. You see the question is whether it's worth while to sneak about and give way to an old man

and a girl for the money. Everybody doesn't think it is."

"Of course not," replied Redfern, gazing at Gerald curiously, amused at his cousin's perfect unconsciousness that he was only protected from indignation by contempt.

"I have known what game you were playing all the week," continued Gerald, "though I said nothing about it."

Redfern did not lose his temper, he merely turned away and answered nothing.

"Your being the eldest, you see," observed Gerald, "gives you a great chance, though Alfred does not seem to see it. That will go a long way with the old man, and will do something even with Letty. Though, my dear fellow, it's a pity that accident left you so lame; couldn't you go up to London and see the physicians there about it? That kind of deformity does not matter to a man

really, you know, but the women think so much about it."

Redfern turned round and looked at Gerald coldly and a little sternly; his face was slightly flushed, his eyes rather brighter than usual, but there was no expression except disgusted surprise in his face. He gazed at Gerald for a moment as at an odd animal, then turned away without speaking.

Violet had just come up; she had been walking with Alfred before. She heard Gerald's last remark, and looked first at him and then at Redfern; she uttered a low horrified, "Oh Gerald!" and put her hand quickly in Redfern's arm.

He turned round and looked at her with a slow, grave smile; she did not precisely know what it meant, if it showed bitterness, or only indifference.

"Do you think I care about it, Violet?" he asked.

“ I don’t know. You are quite right not to do.”

She took her hand away and bent her head. Something in his eyes—a dreary kind of patience that she saw there—hurt her as she looked at him. She did not want any one to see the expression in her own at that moment ; she felt helpless and wounded. There was something cruel in his lot that she could not reach to help ; it wounded her to know it, and at that moment she hated Gerald bitterly, as if it were all his fault.

“ Don’t you think, Gerald,” said Alfred, coming up with his good-natured unconscious air, “ that you had better look after that very fine portmanteau of yours ? It is still across the line, and the train is coming up.”

Gerald shouted at once to a porter, but no porter seemed to hear ; he hurried across

the line himself then in search of his valuable luggage.

“He’ll have to go round the train,” said Alfred; “he has no time to come back.”

“He should have waited for a porter,” said Redfern.

“He must look out,” remarked Alfred, “he’s running it very near. Halloo !”

Gerald was hastening back again to get across before the train came up, but he caught his foot on the line and fell, he tried to rise and stumbled; the train came on, swift and still, there was only a moment’s chance, every one held his breath and looked.

In a second more some one else was on the line; he caught Gerald and pulled him back towards the other side, then, with a great steady rush, the train swept by and hid them both.

Violet was conscious that Alfred only was left standing beside her ; for a moment there was a kind of blank horror in her mind ; she was hardly aware of what she felt or feared, only she knew that Alfred put his arm round her and said :

“ They are all right, Letty, you need not be afraid.”

The train—which proved to be an express, and not Gerald’s at all—rushed by, and a little knot of people, porters and others, came across. Gerald was in the centre, looking very white and frightened ; Redfern walked quietly behind, as if nothing had happened.

“ He’s all right ; he’s not hurt,” he observed, as he came up ; “ go and get some brandy or something, Gerald, you look quite upset, then you’ll feel that you are quite whole and well.”

Gerald stared at him in a helpless, nervous



way, and went on to the refreshment-room with the attendant porters, who were quite ready to look after his portmanteau now.

Redfern walked up to the others.

“Why, Violet, what’s the matter?” he asked; “you look as white as he does. What were you afraid of? Who did you think was going to be killed, Gerald or I?”

He smiled at her, but with a great deal of tenderness in the smile. ‘She looked at him with a look of passionate admiration and reproach, and fear, and relief, all mingled strangely together; she could not speak, and she turned away again, trembling still.

She hardly noticed what happened afterwards. Gerald came to them again, and appeared to expect a great deal of sympathy; then the train came up, and he got in, and had his portmanteau put in afterwards; all

the porters seemed to say, “Yes, sir,” “All right, sir,” a great many times over, and to be very obsequious and very attentive; then the train went off, and they all turned their steps homewards.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LIFE IN TWO HOMES.

THERE followed a few days of pleasant, quiet intercourse, and then Alfred and Redfern went away together; Violet and Mr. Hilborough were left again to the society of each other.

Mr. Hilborough was always absorbed in his own occupations, and it made little difference to him who came or went, except that he enjoyed the occasional presence of a few young people. So long as he had Violet, no one else was necessary to him; but he had begun to like having a young man about to do some active work for him,

and go about the country occasionally in his stead. Alfred had been gradually falling into the habit of doing all he wanted, and being considered a necessary part of Monkholme, though he only went from time to time. There was a slight change now, almost an imperceptible one ; neither Violet nor Mr. Hilborough thought of writing to him quite so often as before, to ask him to arrange any difficulty for them ; there was a little hesitation in Mr. Hilborough's mind if any one suggested that something should be left as usual to be done "when Mr. Alfred came ;" he seemed to prefer managing it himself again.

Not that he was disappointed in Alfred ; he remembered his good qualities as much as ever, only he was more inclined to do without him than before.

Redfern went to Monkholme once during the winter, and stayed there from Saturday

to Monday ; it was a great indulgence for him to grant himself, because the expense was considerable, and he allowed himself no great share of the income he received ; but he felt the want of fresh air, morally as well as physically, and Violet's face came back to him like the memory of a breath of wind from the mountains.

His home life, though not unhappy, was too dull and hopeless. Nothing there spoke to the happier part of his mind, with its capabilities of enjoyment ; nothing seemed to suspect him of youth, or keen sensations, or vivid delights ; he was always expected to be useful and to be quiet, and he was both things successfully.

With Violet it was different : her eyes met his with all the bright and happy sympathy of mutual youth ; she spoke to him as if they belonged to the same world of beauty and pleasure, and so knew the same language of

hope and happiness. So again he walked up the old rough lane, between the coarse, stiff boughs of the bare ash-trees, and Violet, though a frost whitened all the ground, came to the gate to meet him.

That was a visit without any vexations. Violet and Redfern had not one misunderstanding or momentary coldness. There was no one else for Violet to be kind to, and Redfern enjoyed all the sunshine of her bright nature. They, both of them, forgot every one else who lived outside the doors of Monkholme, and seemed to care for no interests but the newly-discovered opinions, tastes and ideas of each other. They had such a period of complete and sympathetic intercourse as Redfern had never enjoyed before. The simplest things they did or said seemed to have a meaning which made them worth thinking about, and revealed peculiarities of character that had been

missed before. They teased and laughed at one another sometimes, but always in complete friendliness, and out of simple delight in their own friendship.

Mr. Hilborough found their society so lively and pleasant, that he forsook his library for Violet's drawing-room; he did not talk much, but sat still and enjoyed their conversation, putting in a wise word now and then. Violet teased him too, quite wildly, but very tenderly, and he only gazed at her with a sense of possession and affection, as if satisfied to think that, however others might lose her, she was always safely his.

She would sit at her grandfather's feet with her hands and her head on his knee, and look across at Redfern, talking saucily to him, and magnifying aloud all his faults in a manner that would have frozen him into reserve and distance once. Now—while Mr.

Hilborough called her naughty, and advised her not to be rude to his guests—Redfern only looked at Violet, into her dark gray eyes, which were full of bright, glad tenderness, and were not at all afraid of his, and hardly listened to what she said, and made no attempt at all to defend himself. He began to understand how much more delightful sympathy is than mere approbation.

“Letty says very uncivil things,” Mr. Hilborough remarked, when Violet had been discoursing rather frankly on Redfern’s crossness and unreasonableness, and general bad temper; “I wonder she does not offend more persons. But you need not mind, Redfern; she would not scold you so persistently if she were secretly your enemy. You will learn some day that a woman will not dare to blame you openly unless a great liking for you gives her courage. She would



be afraid of hurting your feelings otherwise."

"Oh, grandpapa, what shocking things to say!" said Letty, lifting her head to look at him indignantly.

"Never mind, Violet; I won't believe him," Redfern assured her.

"He does, all the same, my dear," Mr. Hilborough remarked quietly.

Redfern left early on Monday morning.

"The worst of coming here is," he said to Violet, "that I have to go away again."

"That will soon be over," she answered consolingly, "and when you get home, you will find something there just as good as anything here."

"Not quite," said Redfern; "there is no other Violet in the world for me, whatever there may be for any one else."

Upon which sentence of his she pondered

all through the months that followed, in which he did not come back at Monkholme.

A quietness settled on the house after he had gone. Violet seemed to have done all her talking for a long time. Alfred came several times to Monkholme, but his visits did not make so great a change in the house as they had done before. Violet was as kind as ever, but a little preoccupied: she did not enter with such a complete mind into all his occupations as she was used to do; she listened to his conversation, and fell into fits of musing, and forgot to answer him; she did not care to seek variety or pleasure, or to enter with a full life into the interests of the time; it seemed as if she stood aside and waited, though what she waited for neither he nor she at all knew.

Certainly Alfred's old place in the household was not ready for him again. Though

he was welcomed with kindness, it was not hard for him to see that Redfern had supplanted him ; that Redfern had gained—in spite of his unobtrusiveness—a greater hold on every one's interests than he had done ; that Redfern's going and coming, his speech and his silence, had a greater weight in every one's mind than his own.

He was not jealous ; he might reasonably have been indignant that the prodigal son should be welcomed back with such delight and affection, while his faithfulness for so many years should be overlooked, that Redfern's visits should serve to date all the events of the household, that his coming in spring should be looked forward to as an epoch in the history of the year, while his own visits were considered indifferently as matters of course. But Alfred was not indignant ; he did not care to have the first place so long as he might have a good one ;

he was not naturally ambitious, and he was also confident that neither Mr. Hilborough nor Violet would forget or neglect him. Redfern was the eldest ; if the estate went to him, it would only be right ; no one had ever told Alfred that it was to be his ; he had his profession, and his uncle was always ready to be his friend and give him reasonable help ; he did not see the need for more. Once it had seemed probable that he might have both Monkholme and Violet ; now if he had Violet only he would be content with his own share, and not grudge the rest to Redfern.

He did not yet think of the danger of Violet preferring Redfern ; she had been long so entirely his own friend, having no reserves from him, that he did not think it likely that she would change. He knew that she did not talk with so much careless openness to Redfern, that she was not so cheerful and

at ease in Redfern's society as in his own ; he knew that she saw Redfern's faults, that they sometimes hurt and vexed her, while she was never offended with his own actions. Violet was exceedingly, almost anxiously kind, to Redfern ; but then she was always kind to those who were cross and unhappy, and to repress herself and be patient and considerate was not a certain proof of affection with her.

Alfred comprehended very well that Redfern's nature was of a higher type than his own, and his character stronger and finer ; but he did not necessarily consider him therefore a man whom a woman was more likely to care for ; he was too self-contained, and yet often provoking, and he was generally quiet and gloomy, or he seemed so to Alfred.

He was not apparently affectionate, or high-spirited, or even very good-tempered ;

he had no good manners or handsome looks ; and Alfred made the great mistake of imagining that these are the qualities for which women choose the men they love and give their lives to.

In spring Redfern came again for a whole week to Monkholme. Mr. Hilborough had made a particular request that he would so. There were several things in which his nephew could give him some help, he said ; so Redfern went, though a little doubtfully. He had not been used to so many holidays, and he could not say that they made him better or more contented. Also, his visits to Monkholme were regarded at home in a light that was unpleasant to him. He had not cared for Gerald's insinuations ; but when they were repeated daily in his own house, and with no idea of provoking him, but rather as a matter of course, he could not be indifferent to them.

“It is very right that you should go,” his mother observed ; “and nothing can be more proper than Mr. Hilborough’s behaviour.”

“In what ?” Redfern asked.

“In treating you as his heir, of course,” replied Mrs. Hilborough.

“He does nothing of the sort,” he said abruptly.

“Well, I’m sure, Redfern !” Mrs. Hilborough answered complainingly. “You need not be angry with your own mother for wishing well to you. I mayn’t show a little affection to my eldest son without his going into a rage about it ! It’s very hard ; but I can’t expect to have any authority or respect now your father’s gone.”

And Mrs. Hilborough wept a little, and felt much afflicted and ill-treated, as she often did.

Redfern did not answer her ; he was not in the habit of defending himself when she attacked him.

Mrs. Hilborough was not at all impressed by her son's assurance that the visits to Monkholme in no way changed his position. She was a little more distant to some of her neighbours on the strength of them, and sympathized with Redfern when he declined invitations which she had teased him to accept before.

“It's natural of you not to want to go to the Lunds'; I don't see why you should. And the girls are not pretty, and can't have more than a thousand pounds each. Do you think your uncle means Monkholme to go with Violet? Or, if he doesn't, will she have much of a separate fortune?”

“I have not the slightest idea,” Redfern answered, writing very hard while she talked.

“But you ought to find out, or how can you tell in what way to act?”

Redfern had no answer to this question.



“There’s Alfred always there,” Mrs. Hilborough rambled on. “They say he’s very good-looking ; but he’s stupid, isn’t he ?”

“Not at all,” Redfern said, without looking up from his writing.

“Well, I’m sure !” said Mrs. Hilborough, with an air of injury ; “you told me so yourself. At any rate, he is not as clever as you.”

“I can’t say.”

“Then,” she replied, with a little asperity, “I’d be ashamed to acknowledge it. I WOULD contrive to be a little cleverer than he is.”

Upon which Redfern got up silently, and carried his papers to his own room, where he wrote in the cold, with a dim light. He did not certainly take the best means to conciliate his mother ; but he was not naturally sweet-tempered, and to be simply patient was as much as he could manage.

Mrs. Hilborough had a great idea of arranging the prosperity of her family. One evening she sat down after tea with a little air of wisdom and management, and suggested that Redfern should do no more of that copying.

“The money is not worth it,” she said. “Let us have a pleasant evening ; you read aloud while I sew.”

Redfern inquired what he should read ; and, with a great appearance of innocence, she handed him a book that she had obtained from the library that day.

“Why, mother,” he said, examining it curiously, “you would not care for this ; it is all heavy reading upon agriculture.”

“I thought it would suit you.”

“Me !” he said, and tossed it on one side, laughing.

“Well, Redfern,” said his mother, with angry dignity. “I don’t see why you

should always laugh at me, as if I hadn't any sense."

"But, mother, hadn't I better choose my own studies?" he asked, recovering himself.

"I don't know whose advice you ought to take, if not your mother's," she said, in an offended tone. "I know your uncle likes to talk about those things, and you ought to know something of them before you go. If you won't think for yourself, I must do the best I can for you."

"It won't make the least difference to uncle or me whether I read that book or not."

"It will, I'm sure. Young people always think they know everything. I dare say Alfred has studied up all those subjects on purpose; but you are so simple, any one may take you in."

Another time Mrs. Hilborough turned the conversation to Violet.

“ I did not like her when she was a little girl,” she observed, “ and I dare say Mr. Hilborough has spoilt her dreadfully ; he let her have her own way in everything—most absurd for a child. Is she very conceited ?”

“ I never heard her called so,” Redfern replied.

“ But you thought her so yourself, did you ? Well, no doubt they think everything of her at your uncle’s, and don’t say when she does wrong. She is not pretty—her likeness shows that ; but she might do, for all that. You don’t seem to care much for one person more than another ; and you can manage people with wilful tempers, as I dare say she has. Was she polite to you ?”

“ She was very kind indeed.”

“ Very likely. No doubt she sees which way Mr. Hilborough’s mind is turning ; and so it will be worth her while to treat you

well. I dare say she won't think so much of Alfred now ; but you must be careful not to offend her with your odd ways."

Redfern had stopped writing, and had been playing impatiently with his pen while she spoke. Now he put it down and looked at her.

"Will you never talk about Violet in that way again?" he said quietly. "I would rather not hear it."

"Really," Mrs. Hilborough replied nervously, conscious of an impending storm, and anxious not to appear to fear it, "it has come to something if I may not talk of what I like in my own family."

"You can do, if you will ; only it will make me act differently," said Redfern. "Say as much as you like about uncle and Monkholme, but I can't stand the talk about Violet. If I have to hear it, I shall give up going to Monkholme ; that's all. I can't

possibly go amongst them all there, while things are talked about in this way here."

Having spoken, Redfern waited as usual half a minute to see if there was any answer, then, with rather a pale face, got up and left the room.

Mrs. Hilborough waited until he was gone ; then she broke into feeble grumblings and angry complaints. She passed over Redfern's offence, but scolded the younger children for all the faults of the past week. She sent one to bed crying, and then cried herself, and said she never met with any affection or gratitude for all she did.

She was not always, however, inclined to grumble about Monkholme and Redfern. Sometimes she was unreasonably elated and satisfied on the subject. She was inclined then to be meek and affectionate to her son : she admired all he said, and spoilt him a

little, waiting on him herself, and making the astonished children do the same.

“Really,” she would say, giving a cross little push to Lucy or Mary, “I wonder at you, not getting your brother’s slippers for him when he comes in tired; run and do him some more toast; you don’t care how hard he works for you, I suppose—you have no affection at all, any of you.”

She had adopted an illogical but obstinate idea, that now that Redfern was in favour at Monkholme, his services were more valuable, and his salary ought to be raised. She incessantly teased him to ask his employers to give him a higher remuneration; but he declined to do so without reason.

“It’s always the same,” she said complainingly. “My own children don’t pay any attention to what I say.”

And this was quite true, and unfortunate, both for them and for her.

However, though no more money was to be obtained from Black, Cummings and Co., she began to take little complacent airs about the house, and to find the carpets too shabby to be put up with any more, and the curtains worn past further use ; she talked largely of buying new things, and discussed materials and patterns ; she also indulged in little luxuries forbidden hitherto, especially in comforts for Redfern, and pretty dresses for her little girls. She bought nothing for herself — that was contrary to her nature.

“ Mother,” said Redfern at last, for he had early been obliged to wear an old head on his young shoulders, “ are you not getting through your money ? We seem to be having a great many new things, and I have not any more to give you.”

“ I am sure,” protested Mrs. Hilborough, “ I have not been extravagant. We wanted



many little things for the house. We can't do without everything."

"We must if we can't afford to pay for it ; and I don't think we can."

"You have such absurd ideas. Now, with your position at Monkholme, we ought to take a better position here."

"The one thing has nothing to do with the other. I have no position at Monkholme, and if I had, it would not pay our debts."

"That was what I was just going to speak about, only you will always interrupt me, and I never can explain anything. I am sure, after inviting you there, and all that, it would be queer if your uncle would not do something for us ; such trifles as I have spent could be nothing to him."

"It is so easy to do without them," said Redfern, "and so galling to be indebted to any one for them. I can't endure to be so."

I must go without something else to pay for them, that is all."

"You are most unreasonable," answered his mother petulantly. "How can you talk in that way of your father's brother? He has been most kind to you, I am sure."

To which Redfern, having, as usual, lost his way through his mother's logic, answered nothing.

"I don't see why, when everybody else gets something out of him, we shouldn't," began Mrs. Hilborough, starting from another point. "He has no children of his own to consider, and all that money to spend."

"He has a granddaughter," Redfern suggested.

"Only a girl—she won't take much to keep. And there is Alfred; I have no doubt he has spent lots of money upon him, and you have never cost him a penny. I do

think he has neglected you shamefully, when you are the eldest too."

Redfern was silent again.

"Now," Mrs. Hilborough concluded, with asperity, "when he is beginning to behave a little better, I think it's very hard if none of the good of it is to come to me, and I am to be grudged a few little extra things for the house. I hope the time has not come yet when I am to be quite ruled by my own children, however clever they may think themselves."

She settled down after that to the diligent darning of stockings, and adopted a mild air of persecution.

"I don't know," she said, when Redfern asked her about any matter; "decide for yourself. I don't wish to interfere."

"Don't come to me," she replied to the children, when they applied to her for some permission or some information. "I can't tell you; you must ask your brother."

“It is too bad,” said Redfern. “I don’t want to arrange all these things ; you should please yourself about them.”

“I have not forgotten what you said the other day,” she replied, with mingled meekness and dignity ; then added, with a little air of tragedy, “Ask me what you like, Redfern ; but don’t expect me to give my opinion when I know it won’t be taken.”

The atmosphere of Redfern’s home was not apparently calculated to improve his temper.

END OF VOL. I.







### **Scotsman.**

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